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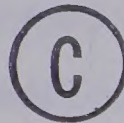
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

JOHN WALKER BARNETT — FIRST GENERAL SECRETARY
OF THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

by



MARION RUTH WALKER

A THESIS

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence and contributions of John Walker Barnett in the field of education in Alberta. The work deals mainly with the years from 1918 to 1946 - a period of twenty-eight years of service as General Secretary of the First General Secretary of The Alberta Teachers' Association. Association" submitted by Marian Ruth Walker in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

on a number of issues are also discussed. However, a large part of the study was devoted to Barnett's efforts to build up the membership in the Alliance, to secure funds for the Alliance and to

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence and contributions of John Walker Barnett in the field of education in Alberta. The work deals mainly with the years from 1918 to 1946 - a period of twenty-eight years of service as General Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Although Barnett's main interest was in teacher welfare, his work in the professional organization of teachers was related to other aspects of education as well. When John Barnett immigrated to Canada, he brought with him a working knowledge of teacher organization which he had acquired as president of a local group of the National Union of Teachers in Surbiton, England. This experience proved helpful to him and his associates in establishing and organizing the teachers' group in Alberta.

In this study some attention has been given to the political and economic conditions which existed during Barnett's tenure of office and which related specifically to educational processes. The study reports on Barnett's activities in connection with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the A. T. A. Magazine, and the Bureau of Education. An account of the part which Barnett played in the two major teacher strikes during his incumbency is outlined. Barnett's personal views

on a number of issues are also discussed. However, a large part of the study was devoted to Barnett's efforts to build up the membership in the Alliance, to secure recognition for the Alliance and to promote the further professional development of the teachers of Alberta.

The last chapter summarizes Barnett's contributions to education and to the teachers of Alberta.

The activities, the perceptions and the value system of this well-known leader in education have been systematically examined and recorded with the hope that the results may be of some value to future educationists in Alberta.

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Dr. Walker, chairman of the committee has been extremely generous with his time, giving advice and encouragement. Dr. Buxton's insistence upon the highest standards of English has been most beneficial. The writer also wishes to thank Dr. Patterson who offered suggestions for the improvement of the text.

Finally, the writer wishes to express her thanks to her mother who gave support and encouragement and bore with patience the inconveniences of the past year.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To the left of the entrance in the main foyer of Barnett House hangs a painting of John Walker Barnett which reminds the visitor that the teachers of Alberta have honored one of the founding fathers of their association. Beside the painting hangs a plaque which bears this inscription:

This building which bears the name of Dr. John Walker Barnett, the first general secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Teachers' Association, was officially opened on June 16, A. D. 1962, by a distinguished life member of the Association, His Honour, Dr. J. Percy Page, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Alberta.

John Barnett's courage and vision were essential elements in the formation of the teachers' organization to which he gave his boundless energies from 1918 to 1946. In a very real sense the functional design of the structure reflects the practical spirit of the man whose name it bears.

Barnett House stands as a symbol of the important part played in our society by the teaching profession.

As teachers, we dedicate this building to Alberta's most important, most exciting, and most loved asset - its children.

The curious visitor might wonder what John Barnett did to merit such an honor.

Purpose and Scope of The Study

It is the purpose of this study to inquire into and record the work of John Walker Barnett in the Alberta Teachers' Alliance (later

called the Alberta Teachers' Association). More specifically, the work gives special consideration to Barnett's contribution to building up the membership in the teachers' organization.

A brief biography describes John Barnett's early life in England, his family background and his education. An insight into his personal qualities is necessary in order to appreciate his motives for action. His interests in life and his teaching career in both England and Canada are discussed. The biography concludes with an account of the tributes and memorials which the teachers of this province have made in appreciation of his work.

The study gives a concise historical outline of the National Union of Teachers, the British organization of which Barnett was a member in England. This is of particular interest because there is evidence that the National Union of Teachers was used as a pattern for the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. Reference is made to the political and economic conditions which influenced the origins and development of the Alliance.

Barnett's personal views are analyzed in the light of their relationship to his duties as general secretary and to his work in improving the welfare of Alberta's teachers. In addition, Barnett's contributions to the Bureau of Education, the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the A. T. A. Magazine are assessed. A study is also made of his other accomplishments in the area of teacher welfare such

as salaries, pensions, and security of tenure. The two major teacher strikes of Barnett's period are given special attention.

Need For The Study

The writer felt the study was justified for two reasons. One justification is that the value systems and perceptions of individuals in positions of leadership in organizations are worthy of investigation. Educationists need such knowledge about the rationale which motivates these leaders in decision making. Another justification of the investigation is that it is timely. Some of the sources used in the study would no longer have been available if this account of a great educator had been delayed. At the time of writing this study, the role played by John Barnett in the development of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance had not been formally recorded.

Sources of Information

Valuable information for this study has been obtained from the memoirs of Barnett's associates¹ many of whom are past presidents of the Association, from such documents as the records of the Alberta Teachers' Association and from the newspapers of the day. The publications of the Alberta Teachers' Association were the primary sources of information, while historical studies of Alberta and its

¹For a list of memoirs see the Bibliography p. 136.

educational system in the form of theses provided information about the A. T. A. and the Alberta School Trustees' Association.

Much valuable reference material was obtained from the offices of the National Union of Teachers in London, England, in the form of pamphlets, booklets and photostatic copies of monographs. Asher Tropp's book The School Teachers,² a historical account of the Union, was also very helpful for this phase of the study. Other texts used were Schools of the Foothills Province³ and Teachers of the Foothills Province⁴ by J. W. Chalmers which supplied material on the history of both schools and teachers of Alberta. Supplementary data were obtained from oral and written communications with relatives and persons whose past activities qualified them as sources of information.

Definition of Terms and Contractions

Alberta Education Association. (A. E. A.) This term refers to the organization of university personnel, clergymen, officers of the Department of Education and teachers, which existed from about 1911 to 1946.

²A. Tropp, The School Teachers (London: Heineman Ltd., 1957).

³J. W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1967).

⁴J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968).

Alberta School Trustees' Association. (A. S. T. A.) This term refers to the organization of members of school boards the purpose of which is "to provide a medium of communicating to the Minister of Education the views of the people of the Province on educational questions and of pressing the same on his attention," and "to consider all matters having a practical bearing on education and on the school system."⁵

Alberta Teachers' Alliance (Association). (A. T. A.) This term refers to the organization which includes as its members only those teachers holding a valid Alberta teaching certificate and employed by a publicly controlled and supported school system. The name was changed to Alberta Teachers' Association in 1935.

Annual General Meeting. (A. G. M.) This term refers to the annual meeting (held during Easter Week) of delegates of Locals of the A. T. A., the purpose of which is to instruct the Executive Council, to establish policy by adopting resolutions and to listen to reports of officers and committees. It has been called "the parliament of the A. T. A." It is now called the Annual Representative Assembly. (A. R. A.)

Boards of Trustees. Each school district and each school division in Alberta has, as its policy-making body a board of members,

⁵J. H. Fleetwood, "Chairman's Address," Report of the Proceedings of the First Provincial School Boards' Convention for Alberta, Edmonton, January, 1907, pp. 11 - 12.

varying from three to seven in number, elected by the ratepayers of the district or division, and known as the School Board or The Board of Trustees.

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (C.T.F.) This term refers to the national organization of teachers in Canada consisting of provincial organizations of teachers with the role of "co-ordinating information and promoting co-operation among the provincial affiliates."⁶

Provincial Government. This term refers to the Legislative Assembly and/or the Cabinet of the Government of the Province of Alberta. (The Alberta School Act, 1905).

Teacher. The School Act of the Province of Alberta states that a teacher is "a person holding a permanent or temporary certificate of qualification as a teacher issued by the Minister under The Department of Education Act."¹¹

The Teaching Profession Act. (T.P.A.) This term refers to the legislation passed in 1935 and the amendments thereto in 1936 giving the A.T.A. power to discipline its members, making membership in the Association compulsory and granting the recognition of the Association as a professional group.

⁶ J.M. Paton, The Role of Teachers' Organizations in Canadian Education (Quance Lectures, 1962), p. 37.

United Farmers of Alberta. (U. F. A.) This term refers to an organization of farmers which became actively engaged in the political life of the Province of Alberta. The U. F. A. formed the government which was in power from 1921 to 1935.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF JOHN WALKER BARNETT

Family Background

John Walker Barnett was the seventh son in a family of fourteen children born to Reuben Thurlby Barnett and his wife Mary Ann Walker. There were six girls and eight boys, one of whom died in infancy. Reuben Barnett and his wife resided in Grantham, Lincolnshire, England and it was there on August 28, 1880, that John Walker Barnett was born. His father was a wheelwright by trade and a lay preacher in the Methodist Church where the children all gathered each Sunday to listen to their father preach and to sing in the choir. It was, no doubt, there that John developed his good singing voice which was to assist him later in his career.¹

Early Life and Education

John Barnett received his early education at the Grantham Wesleyan School and the Grantham Technical Institute. The son of a wheelwright in England at the turn of the century did not have the opportunity to attend university. However, young Barnett was a

¹Information regarding Barnett's early life was supplied by his widow, Mrs. Charlotte Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968.

bright boy who was determined to get ahead. In 1896 he was offered a job as a pupil-teacher² in the school which he had first attended. An older brother, who had already become a teacher, persuaded John to accept the offer. That Barnett proved to be a satisfactory assistant is demonstrated by a letter of recommendation written by the Head Master in 1900 after Barnett had been a pupil-teacher for four years.³ After competing successfully in the Queen's Scholarship Examination, he entered Westminster Teacher Training College in London at the age of 20. He graduated in 1902 with a First Class Parchment Certificate issued by the Board of Education of England and Wales.⁴

²The term pupil-teacher was first used by Kay-Shuttleworth in England in 1846. His scheme to foster the training of teachers was copied from a similar system in use in Holland. Selected boys and girls were offered stipends to become indentured as pupil-teachers. The teachers who trained them received special grants for giving the pupil-teachers seven and one half hours of instruction per week before or after school hours. Pupil-teachers were expected to spend the five and one half hour school day in teaching or some related activity. Her Majesty's Inspectors examined them each year and after an apprenticeship of four or five years, the pupil-teacher was allowed to compete for Queen's Scholarships at training colleges. This system was a considerable improvement over the Bell-Lancaster Monitorial system, but was regarded even by Kay-Shuttleworth himself simply as a temporary measure to bridge the gap between the Monitorial system and an efficient permanent method of training adult teachers. H. C. Barnard, A History of English Education From 1760 (London: University Press, 1961), p. 105.

³See Appendix B for a copy of the Head Master's letter and other letters of recommendation which have been kindly supplied by Mrs. Barnett from Barnett Papers.

⁴J. W. Barnett, Statement of Qualifications from Barnett Papers.

Barnett was what may be referred to as a generalist in education. His wide range of abilities and interests enabled him to acquire proficiency in many areas. While a pupil-teacher at Grantham, he taught science, art, shorthand and music. Later he earned a Teacher's Certificate in vocal music from the Tonic Sol-fa College in London. His interest in science led him to enrol in a six-month course at the Battersea Polytechnic Institute. He also earned First Class Certificates in Art and Manual Training while at Westminster College.

Teacher In England

Barnett began his teaching career as a full-fledged Certified Trained Master at the Wesleyan Higher Grade School in New Brompton.⁵ His next teaching post was at the Queen's Road Council School in Wimbledon where he remained for one year. In 1905 Barnett moved to Aldershot where he was employed as an Army Schoolmaster at the cavalry brigade garrison school for a year and a half. He then taught at Surbiton in the Tolworth Council School — a position he was to hold for the next six years.⁶ It was while teaching there that Barnett became active in the National Union of Teachers of England and Wales.⁷ He had been a member of this organization for several years when, in

⁵See Appendix B for letters of recommendation.

⁶Barnett, loc. cit.

⁷Infra, Chapter III.

1908, he became Vice President of the Surbiton and District Branch. He was advanced to the Presidency in 1909 --- a position he held until immigrating to Canada in 1911.⁸

On December 26, 1906, John Barnett was married to Charlotte Neuss, a London girl whom he had met while at Westminster College. Their two oldest children were born in Surbiton, a son, Bernard John in 1908 and a daughter, Ethel in 1910. Two other children were born in Edmonton after the family came to Canada.⁹

Immigration To Canada

Lack of educational opportunities for his children was the chief motivating factor in Barnett's decision to leave England. He was encouraged by a friend John R. Geeson who had previously emigrated. Barnett wrote to the Deputy Minister of Education for Alberta, D.S. MacKenzie, who assured him that there would be a teaching position open for him. Accordingly, he sailed from Southampton leaving his wife and children behind and arrived in Canada in May, 1911.¹⁰

Teacher In Canada

John Barnett's first teaching post in Alberta was at Park Hill,

⁸ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (February, 1921), p. 16.

⁹ Statement by Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968.

¹⁰ Ibid.

a one room rural school near the town of Lougheed. Perhaps his experiences there prompted him to champion the cause of rural teachers. Most of the amenities to which he was accustomed in England were lacking in rural Alberta at that time. However, he remained at Park Hill from June to December, 1911 at which time he secured a position as Supervisor of Music with the Edmonton Public School Board. After six months in Edmonton, Barnett felt secure enough of the future to send for his family. His wife and two small children arrived in June, 1912, and took up residence at Alberta College North where Barnett had accepted a position as vice-principal that same summer.¹¹ After spending one year at Alberta College, he became principal of the commercial department at Strathcona High School, where he commenced duties in September, 1913. There he remained until he took over the position of full-time general secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance on July 1, 1920.¹²

Interests

John Barnett was a man of great physical endurance and no account of his life would be complete without some reference to his athletic prowess. He was a strong swimmer and won a cup in a

¹¹Ibid.

¹²A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (June, 1920), p. 25.

swimming race at Grantham in 1899. He was captain of the Swimming Team at Westminster College in 1901-02 and held a certificate for proficiency in long distance swimming granted by Charles Newman, Swimming Expert.¹³ As a young man, he was full of bounce and energy and loved the challenging competition of a game. While teaching at New Brompton in 1903-04, he played football in the Southern League.¹⁴ His interest in this sport continued even after coming to Edmonton. Hicks gives the following description of Barnett in action. "John was a much feared full back who had some professional experience from playing with the Aston Villa team of the English Soccer League. His opponents soon learned that he was a formidable foe and warned their teammates to pass the ball before he could hit them. This was a lesson to be learned over the years by all and sundry who chose to injure members of the A. T. A."¹⁵

John Barnett also enjoyed duck hunting, camping and gardening, but above all these hobbies, ranked his affection for his dogs. Hicks elaborates:

The devotion of English people to pedigreed horses and dogs is proverbial and it is not surprising to find that the Barnett household was a sanctuary for noble dogs. Their famous Collies

¹³Barnett, loc. cit.

¹⁴A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (February, 1921), p. 16.

¹⁵C. O. Hicks, "Reminiscences" (Unpublished memoir, February, 1967), p. 14.

were accorded an honorable place as members of the household and acted towards guests like the patricians they actually were . . . for were they not the very last to bid their master goodbye on his road trips and the very first to announce his return with vocal demonstrations of wild delight.¹⁶

Although it would seem that Barnett's waking hours were completely filled carrying out his duties as general secretary, still he found time for a game of billiards or chess with his friends. During the year of 1945-46, Barnett was president of the Edmonton Chess Club and was presented with a hardwood chess board by the members.

Barnett's interests and abilities were by no means limited to physical activities. His musical and artistic talents, fostered from childhood, provided much enrichment to his own life as well as to the lives of his family and friends. Speaking of the Barnett home, Hicks says:

If perchance one were fortunate enough to be invited as a guest to the Barnett's home, it was impossible not to feel the distinctive and inimitable old English courtesy which pervaded. Good talk, the best in music and art - these constituted the intellectual background and enjoyment.¹⁷

Of Barnett himself, Lazerte says, "John was whole-heartedly devoted to his family; he was a genial host; he was an interesting conversationalist."¹⁸

¹⁶ C. O. Hicks, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ M. E. Lazerte, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 11.

Though Barnett derived much satisfaction from his wide range of activities, it is safe to say that his greatest source of gratification was his work. During the early years of the Alliance's history, the job of general secretary entailed a great deal of travelling to contact rural teachers. Probably one reason that John Barnett was so successful in this phase of his work was that he loved to travel. No doubt he travelled thousands of miles in rural Alberta, but his trips were not confined to this province only. He made many trips across Canada attending Canadian Teachers' Federation conventions. However, his longest journey was made in 1936 when he returned to England as a delegate to the World Federation of Teachers convention in Cheltenham. Mrs. Barnett accompanied him and they spent three months visiting relatives and old friends before returning to Canada.¹⁹ The following quotation sums up Barnett's interests:

A tireless organizer and champion of Canadian Teachers; A philosopher deeply grounded in study, experience and intercourse with other minds. A lover of fine dogs, diverse books and good music; A ruthless, intrepid chess-player; A virtuoso of billiards whose mastery few of us (but still a few) dare to challenge; A man most happy in his home and garden nevertheless, a jovial companion on long journeys and in strange hostelries; A strong debater and a councillor of long vision; A graceful dispenser of cigars . . . good cigars; A connoisseur of life's wholesome things - merriment, duck-hunting, rare steak, fine arts, keen argument; A stubborn Englishman and a

¹⁹Statement by Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968.

true son of the west.²⁰

Retirement and Death

As early as 1940 the Association had entered a period of unrest which culminated in the open rebellion of the A. G. M. against the general secretary. Criticism of the Executive Council generally and of the general secretary specifically by some of the A. T. A. members eventually led to the demand for Barnett's retirement. The delegates to the A. G. M. denounced the Executive Council for abusing expense accounts by running up long distance telephone bills unnecessarily and charging the expenses of personal business to the Association. The admission in the council minutes that general unrest prevailed was proof enough that the criticism had become wide spread.²¹ A new generation of teachers was making it plain that they were no longer satisfied with Barnett's services.

Over the years, attempts had been made at various times — even during the Twenties — to provide an assistant for the general

²⁰ A Greeting to J. W. Barnett from some friends at the close of twenty-eight years' service for the C. T. F., June, 1947. Ethel Coppinger, Davi Shannon, E. N. Crutchfield, Otto B. Millar, Hilda K. Kinney, Eric C. Ansley, E. A. Braithwaite, C. Wayne Hall, G. E. Tingley, C. J. Oates, George Watson, Charles Peasley, E. E. Hyde, A. J. H. Powell, Marian Gimby, W. A. Rea, G. Elliott, J. G. Niddrie, Gordon G. Harman, H. C. Newland, A. Rosborough, D. L. Shortliffe, L. B. MacNaughton, B. W. Harrigan, E. Floyd Willoughby, H. E. Smith, H. D. Ainlay, Cedric O. Hicks, M. E. Lazerte, C. Sansom.

²¹ Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, July 3, 1943.

secretary, but Barnett consistently rejected the idea. Since he did not wish to share the limelight with any one, he claimed he needed no help.

Powell gives us Barnett's thoughts on this matter:

His attitude, tacit but unmistakable, [sic] was 'I made this organization. I remake it every year. It's mine, and no Johnny-come-lately is going to take over any of it.' That was why, until his final year, he could not be persuaded to take a deputy-secretary into his office.²²

Though Barnett claimed to have built and re-built the Association each year with his membership drives, Chalmers avers that 'he had not built the Association single-handedly, but he had been the one indispensable man in the organization.'²³ Nevertheless, there began to be heard rumblings of discontent among the 'young Turks' of the A. G. M. and at the 1940 Easter convention they passed a resolution recommending that an assistant to the general secretary be appointed. It was hoped that this measure would pave the way for Barnett's retirement, but nothing came of it. The older Executive Council members recalled Barnett's sacrifices and struggles during the Great Depression for the life of the Association; they remembered his long tiring trips over muddy roads to save some teacher's job and they hesitated to press for his retirement when he seemed reluctant to give up the position.

²²A. J. H. Powell, 'The Alberta Teachers' Alliance' (Unpublished memoir, 1962), p. 31.

²³J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968), p. 175.

It was a touchy situation, but the Council did go so far as to pass the following resolution in 1941: "Resolved that since the general secretary has reached maturity he sit for a photo at the earliest opportunity."²⁴ The Council also set up a retirement benefit for him, hoping that this measure would be an additional hint to retire. Although the A. G. M. continued to pass resolutions in favor of the retirement of the general secretary, the Executive Council continued to ignore them thus proving that in the final analysis, the Council held the real power. And hold out it did — until December, 1945 when Barnett finally submitted his resignation as general secretary to become effective on August 31, 1946.²⁵ For one year following, he would continue to serve as honorary secretary at \$100 per month with the understanding that he would enter complete retirement in August, 1947. And thus the vexing problem of his retirement was finally settled. The Edmonton Bulletin printed a three column headline, "Champion of Teaching Profession, John W. Barnett Ends Service," above a lengthy article of praise, along with his picture.²⁶ The Edmonton Journal carried this editorial:

²⁴ Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, April 18, 1941.

²⁵ Ibid., December 15, 1945.

²⁶ Edmonton Bulletin, September 4, 1946, p. 9.

The retirement of John W. Barnett as general secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance [sic] brings to an end a long career spent in the service of the schools and teachers of the province.

The condition of Alberta teachers — especially in rural districts — is still a hard one; but it has improved enormously since 1911, the year Mr. Barnett started teaching in this province. For this improvement much of the credit is due to him.

As the leading spirit of the A. T. A. during many years, he battled to secure higher salaries, better living conditions and security of tenure for all teachers. In these efforts he gained a very considerable measure of success. He was also largely responsible for the eventual recognition of teaching as a profession.

Mr. Barnett's activities, however, have by no means been directed exclusively to the advancement of his fellow-teachers. He has also worked to raise the standards of the profession, to lengthen and improve the training courses, and to modernize the curriculum, in both elementary and high schools. In this field too, many of the changes of recent years have stemmed from suggestions made by the A. T. A. and its secretary.²⁷

In 1946, the A. G. M. honored the Barnetts by presenting them with a silver tea service. The University of Alberta decided to award to Barnett the Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree which the Executive Council of the A. T. A. had recommended he receive in 1941.²⁸ However, the degree had to be awarded posthumously as Barnett died suddenly on June 29, 1947, of a gastro-intestinal disorder after an illness of only five days.²⁹

²⁷ Edmonton Journal, May 1, 1946, p. 6.

²⁸ Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, January 4, 1947.

²⁹ Statement by Mrs. Barnett, November 4, 1968.

Tributes

It is regrettable that Barnett did not live to write the book he had planned dealing with educational-autobiographical subjects.³⁰ In order to compensate for this loss, an attempt was made to print each year in the A. T. A. Magazine, articles and editorials dealing with subjects the book might have contained. Thus for several years after Barnett's death, the March issue of the magazine appeared with a picture of Barnett on the cover and its contents were dedicated to his memory.

Another tribute appeared in the form of an annual scholarship to teachers who wished to improve their qualifications. A fund had been started in 1938 when the Association set aside three \$1000 amounts to be used for library, research and scholarship.³¹ These funds had been gradually accumulating until 1946 when the first scholarship of \$300 was awarded in the name of John Walker Barnett.³² This scholarship has been awarded annually ever since. However, in recent years the amount has increased considerably. In 1967 a \$2400 Fellowship in Education was awarded in Barnett's name,³³ while the Barnett

³⁰Edmonton Bulletin, September 4, 1946, p. 9.

³¹ Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, December 28, 1938.

³²Ibid., September 7, 1946.

³³Chalmers, op. cit., p. 240.

Fellowship in 1969 for intramural doctoral study amounted to \$3600.³⁴

Barnett's colleagues created many monuments to his memory, but the most tangible evidence of their esteem found expression in the naming of the Association buildings after him. The first Barnett House was officially opened by Dr. M. E. Lazerte, past president of the A. T. A., on November 24, 1951. His dedication address stated in part:

. . . teachers, school board members and public alike know that the outstanding figure in the A. T. A., the dominating personality in the organization from 1917 until his death on June 29, 1947, was Dr. John W. Barnett, who, with industry, patience and fearlessness worked day and night, in season and out for both the improvement of the teachers' economic and social status and the welfare of general education in the province

We meet here today to open officially Barnett House How he should have loved to see this building that marks the fulfilment of his dreams. . . . I now have the honor of naming this building Barnett House and the pleasure of asking Mrs. Barnett to present to Mr. Eric Ansley general secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association the key of Barnett House, a key that, . . . will ever serve as a reminder of all that her late husband's idealism, courage, industry and loyalty did for this association throughout the many years he served as its chief executive officer.

I am pleased to declare Barnett House officially open as the present and future home of the Alberta Teachers' Association and to dedicate it to the service of education in Alberta.³⁵

Lazerte's prediction that Barnett House would be the future home of the A. T. A. was short-lived. The remarkable growth of the Association rendered that building inadequate within ten years. A second Barnett House was named after Dr. Barnett and dedicated to the

³⁴ Alberta Teachers' Association, Fellowship and Scholarship Brochure, 1968-69.

³⁵ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXII (December, 1951), p. 13-16.

children of Alberta in 1962.³⁶ The spacious offices of the new Barnett House were a far cry from the office John Barnett kept in his spare bedroom in 1918, but even this new building has been added to recently.

Another memorial appeared in the form of a small paper-covered pamphlet entitled In Memory of John Walker Barnett. This anthology, compiled by Barnett's colleagues and close friends, opens with the following poem by John Burke:

To John Barnett -

He was strong -
The strong are many.
He was wise
But many men are wise.
His wisdom and his strength
Were rare
Only in this,
That both were used for others.

He was of all men fearless,
Yet knew
So well
The fears of little men
Caught fast
In the tyrant-grip
Of yesterday.

He did not fear To-morrow,
And Today
He used
For wider sowing.

Up to the last he toiled
For our growing.
Let us, who stay for harvest -
In our yearning -

³⁶ Supra, Chapter I, p. 1.

Still follow in the furrow
Of his turning.³⁷

Opposite the poem is a picture of Barnett followed by the eulogies of his confreres. In the book, M. J. Coldwell, Member of Parliament for Rosetown-Biggart, summarizes Barnett's contribution briefly:

John's self-sacrifice, his dynamic personality, his courage and his judgment were recognized by all who knew him The best memorial that could possibly be raised to any man is the legacy of improvement in the lot of his colleagues and his fellow-men. John Barnett left a memorial to last as long as the teaching profession remains in the country and in the province which he loved.³⁸

Among various other tributes by good friends such as Lazerte, Powell and Hicks, and professional associates such as Coldwell, Low and Casey, there is the citation by G. F. McNally with which the book closes. This citation was given by the Chancellor of the University in conferring the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws posthumously on the late Mr. John W. Barnett at Fall Convocation, October 18, 1947 in Convocation Hall:

The Senate of this University, at its February meeting, granted the Degree of Laws, honoris causa to John Walker Barnett, for many years General Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I had the privilege and honor of informing Mr. Barnett of the Senate's action and of formally inviting him to accept the degree. On two other occasions only did I see him so deeply moved. In a voice filled with emotion, he said he would be happy to accept the honor, realizing that in honoring him the University wished to pay a tribute to the great profession to which he had given his life.

³⁷John Burke, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), opposite frontispiece.

³⁸M. J. Coldwell, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 16.

In the meantime his work has been completed and he has gone from us.

John Walker Barnett was born in Grantham, Lincolnshire sixty-seven years ago. He came of vigorous north country stock and of a family of teachers. Not so long ago his oldest brother retired after a distinguished career as a headmaster. After training at Westminster College, he was certified and entered upon his teaching career. He taught for some time in the Army College at Aldershot and at Surbiton before coming to Canada. In 1911 he came to Alberta and at once began to work as a teacher. He brought with him a firsthand knowledge of the work of the National Union of Teachers and soon reached the conclusion that the teachers in this country were handicapped by the lack of a similar organization. When the Alberta Teachers' Alliance came into being, it was natural that Mr. Barnett's knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and faith should be enlisted in the direction of the infant organization. From that time, the history of the Association was largely a history of the activities of John W. Barnett. In journeyings, often in perils of floods, in perils of the wilderness, in perils of dirt roads or no roads, he carried on. Though progress was slow, indifference great, and opposition powerful, no one ever heard John Barnett complain or say a disloyal word of those he had set out to serve.

He was largely instrumental in the formation of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the national organization. He persuaded Legislatures to make important changes in The School Act and played a part in drafting such legislation as The Teachers' Retirement Fund Act and The Teaching Profession Act. He served on the Department's Liason Committee on Teacher Training, which later evolved the plan of Teacher Education now in effect in this Province. As a member of the Survey Committee which was responsible for our present University Act, and later as a member of the Senate of this University, he played his full part.

So then, as an able teacher, as a man of great courage and singleness of purpose, as a fearless fighter, as a champion of the weak and defenceless, as a matchless leader and as a gallant and upright gentleman, we honor his memory and confer on him posthumously the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.³⁹

Three years after his death an additional memorial was dedicated to Barnett's memory by the teachers of Alberta in the form

³⁹G. F. McNally, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 22-23.

of an honorary membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association. This is the highest award and the greatest honor which the organization bestows. John Walker Barnett was the second person to receive an honorary life membership in the Association. The first was awarded in 1949 to Dr. Clarence Sansom. Barnett's honorary membership was conferred posthumously in April, 1950.⁴⁰

Summary

Barnett's tombstone in the Edmonton Cemetery bears this simple epitaph, "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it."⁴¹ This quotation from Emerson's New England Reformers is a fitting tribute to a hardy pioneer in education. Although Barnett's demise was somewhat premature, he did live to see most of his goals for the Association fulfilled and no doubt he derived a great deal of satisfaction from his accomplishments. "Few men indeed have left such an enduring mark on the educational system of our province"⁴² and it is safe to say that he will be remembered as long as the Association lasts.

⁴⁰ Alberta Teachers' Association, Members' Handbook (Edmonton: The Alberta Teachers' Association, 1968), p. 11.

⁴¹ Statement by Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968.

⁴² Edmonton Journal, May 1, 1946, p. 6.

CHAPTER III

EUROPEAN ROOTS OF THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

The National Union of Teachers

Although the calling or occupation of teaching dates back to antiquity, the organization of teachers into professional groups is a comparatively recent phenomenon. One of the first of these organizations was the Educational Institute of Scotland founded in 1847 and chartered four years later. According to Paton it "is said to be the first teachers' organization in Europe with a valid claim to represent most of the teachers in a legally constituted system of schools."¹ More than twenty years later, in 1870, the National Union of Elementary Teachers of England and Wales was organized with J. J. Graves as its president. In his first presidential address to the N. U. E. T. Graves stated the general philosophy of the organization in these words:

We inaugurate in founding this National Union of Elementary Teachers, no aggressive association. We desire to assail nobody. We do desire to think and act as reasonable and educated men; to advocate improvements in our educational schemes and machinery to look after the welfare of the nation as far as elementary education affects it, and at the same time try to advance our own interests, convinced that by the elevation of the teachers, we

¹ J. M. Paton, The Role of Teachers' Organizations in Canadian Society (Quance Lectures, 1962), p. 24.

elevate the value of education, and accelerate the progress of civilization.²

The year 1870 was an important one for British teachers because it was not only the birthday of their Union, but also the date of The Education Act which gave the teachers considerable freedom and independence. It also gave the teachers a new employer, the School Board. However, the inauguration of this act posed the problem of how properly qualified teachers were to be found to fill the large number of new schools which would be created by the division of the whole country into school districts. Graves feared that in order to meet the demands, the Education Department would lower the standards of certification and thus impair the quality of instruction. He felt it would be better for all concerned if temporary teachers were recruited and permitted to teach without certificates until properly trained professional teachers were available. Graves welcomed The Education Act even though he viewed it as only one part of a general scheme to consolidate and improve the education of the country. He believed that the advancement of teachers' interests was paramount and looked to the Union to raise the status of teachers by bringing pressure to bear on both the government and on the teachers' immediate employers.

²A. Tropp, The School Teachers (Quoting from the Educational Reporter, December 1870), p. 108.

Aims and Structure of the N. U. T.

Graves and his colleagues were interested in raising the educational level of the country as well as improving working conditions of the teachers. They therefore set forth the objects of the Union as follows:

- 1) Control of entrance to the profession and teachers' registration.
- 2) Recruitment of teachers to the Inspectorate.
- 3) Gaining of the right of appeal.
- 4) Superannuation.
- 5) Revision of the educational code.
- 6) Gaining of security of tenure.
- 7) Freedom from compulsory extraneous duties.
- 8) Adequate salaries.
- 9) Freedom from obnoxious interference.³

The original constitution of the N. U. E. T. ensured continuity of principles and practices. "To secure an unchallenged tenure of office through Vice-Presidency, Presidency and Ex-Presidency the members occupying these three positions are declared elected for their districts without election. The number of elected members is correspondingly reduced."⁴ Standing committees were set up to take care of finance,

³Ibid., p. 112.

⁴Foster Watson (ed.), Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Education, Vol. III (London, 1922), p. 1161.

education, law and tenure, salaries, organization and legislation, and superannuation. Each committee was to be chaired by a member of the Executive with provision also being made for the setting up of special committees for special interest groups. Meetings were to be held once a month on the first Saturday, and the official organ of the association was named The Schoolmaster, a publication which was to exert considerable influence on the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. During the first twenty-five years of its existence, the Union labored within this constitutional frame-work to accomplish its basic aims. In two areas, it may be said that the Union gained complete victories — the ending of payment by results and the establishment of a pension scheme. However, no progress was made in controlling entrance, in teachers' registration, in security of tenure, or in obtaining adequate salaries. Thus it seemed that no great progress had been made but the years from 1873 to 1892 might be looked upon as a period when the Union was marshalling its forces. Membership was built up and methods of exerting pressure on school boards and on government were developed — two features which were to produce great gains under President Yoxall between 1892 and 1924.

Meanwhile, in 1889, the Union had dropped the word Elementary from its title, and is today known as the National Union of Teachers. Although this association is now open to all teachers, it is still the chief representative of elementary teachers, but it is by no

means the only teachers' group in England. Special groups of secondary teachers have set up their own organizations, namely the "Joint Four" consisting of headmasters, headmistresses, assistant masters and assistant mistresses. There are many other associations of teachers in Colleges, Universities and Technical Schools as well as the National Association of Schoolmasters whose present membership is approximately 20,000.⁵

Accomplishments of the N. U. T.

The N. U. T. has taken a leading role in advocating and formulating good educational policy even if this role meant conflict with the government where matters affecting the work of the schools and the welfare of the children were concerned. Even as early as 1922 the N. U. T. was striving to secure a highly qualified, publicly recognized independent, learned Profession by attempting to reform the system of training teachers and by trying to regulate the supply. Surprisingly enough, there was also talk of equal pay for mistresses and masters working in mixed or boys' departments and the setting up of a Court of Appeal to guard against unjust dismissal of teachers. The Union has consistently held to the principle of non-denominationalism in order to avoid religious disputes, but at the same time has condoned religious

⁵G. Baron, Society, Schools and Progress in England (London: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1965), p. 72.

teaching in the schools. Because the N. U. T. has always averred "that the teaching profession is, or should be, one and indivisible",⁶ it has therefore never given any recognition whatsoever to special groups of teachers such as Church School, Secondary, Primary or Board School teachers. These principles of impartiality, the sound basis on which the union was established, and its intelligent, dedicated leadership have all contributed to the phenomenal growth and unequivocal success of the Union. In 1965, Armytage, referring to the National Union of Teachers, stated that the teachers in Britain "had established the strongest association of teachers in the world and endowed it with one of the most lucrative organs of the educational press."⁷ Kratzman sums up the accomplishments of the Union in 1963 by stating that it:

. . . had established a retirement fund for teachers, had offered protection and free legal advice for members, had exerted considerable influence on the administration of elementary schools, on teacher preparation programs and on the establishment of professional standards for teachers and undertaken an active program to improve salaries and raise the status of teachers and teaching in Britain.⁸

⁶Watson, op. cit., p. 1158.

⁷W. H. G. Armytage, Four Hundred Years of English Education (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), p. 157.

⁸A. Kratzmann, "The Alberta Teachers' Association: A Documentary Analysis of a Professional Organization," Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1963, p. 34.

The Alberta Situation

The foregoing is a brief resume of the organization of which John Walker Barnett was a member in England and which was to be an important influence in the establishment of the teachers' association in Alberta. When Barnett immigrated to Alberta in 1911, he was appalled at the lack of organization of the teachers and the deplorable conditions under which teachers were attempting to carry on. Powell describes their plight:

There were no salary schedules worth the name, and no such thing as collective bargaining. At the beginning of World War I the Edmonton School Board had unilaterally and without consultation with the teachers voted a stiff percentage of their salaries to be contributed to a national servicemen's welfare fund. The teachers had no organization capable of either opposing or redressing such brigandage. While the stresses of war raised the price of everything, there were no channels of negotiation for pay increases.

Throughout the province the outlook was discouraging. Children of grade ten standing were teaching rural schools by letter of authority, and a mixed bag of recruits from east and south was offering very patchy service. School buildings were poor and cold, supplies meagre, books at a minimum, playground equipment nil.⁹

Barnett soon put his past experience in the N. U. T. to work in Alberta. He had served as president and vice president of the local branch of the Union in the town of Surbiton where he had taught for six years. Thus he was well aware of the value and need of such an organization in Alberta. He was strongly backed by men of vision such as Misener,

⁹A. J. H. Powell, "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance" (Unpublished memoir, 1962), p. 24.

Leppard, Stanley and Peasley as well as by many of his fellow colleagues who had immigrated from the British Isles during the pre-war years. These latter, because of their teaching experience in England as members of the N.U.T. expected aggressive leadership and support from their organization in Alberta. They were qualified teachers who according to Inspector Thibaudeau were "much better trained in music, drawing, manual work and literature than our own or eastern teachers."¹⁰ In other words, many of these British teachers were professionals and their influence was felt in the development of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. These pioneers resolved that they would establish a truly professional organization which would be comparable to the associations of doctors and lawyers. Accordingly, Barnett and his cohorts set out to build an Alliance which would achieve and maintain a proper balance in three main areas: the setting of professional standards of conduct for members, the maintenance of a proper scale of remuneration and proper working conditions, and the formulation of policies in regard to the work in which the members are engaged.¹¹

Ever since the Alberta Teachers' Alliance was organized in

¹⁰P. H. Thibaudeau, Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Education of Alberta (Edmonton: The King's Printer, 1912), p. 49.

¹¹Eustace Percy (ed.), The Year Book of Education (London: Evans Bros. Ltd., 1932), p. 280.

1917, there has been a great deal of talk about professionalism in Alberta. Much time has been spent in trying to define the professional person as opposed to the non-professional. Paton lists the following criteria:

1) He has specialized knowledge. This means that his work makes intellectual demands upon him; that he must retain a scholarly, inquiring attitude; and that he must constantly take responsibility for important decisions affecting the personal lives of people.

2) He uses specialized skills and techniques. Despite the foregoing emphasis upon the ability to conceptualize and to generalize, a profession has a practical side involving techniques that can be taught to others, provided they already have the basic intellectual equipment.

3) He serves society and people. A professional person is motivated by a desire to help people and to serve important social ends. Because of this and in view of the two characteristics already mentioned, he works best independently, with a minimum of supervision from fellow-professionals and without interference from lay men.

4) He has a corporate voice. Professionals are strongly organized in order to attain and to maintain high standards of admission to, and competence in the practice of their chosen profession.¹²

When John Barnett began his career in Alberta, teaching could hardly be called a profession. He, and no doubt many of his colleagues, could meet Paton's first three requirements, but they lacked the fourth — a "corporate voice" that would speak for the teachers as a body. Accordingly, they began to agitate for this right. Their first

¹²Paton, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

attempt in 1916 to form an exclusive teachers' organization was abortive chiefly because it was entrusted to School Inspector George Gorman, a member of the Alberta Education Association. Chalmers says that "choosing a school inspector for this purpose appears to have all the logic of an early Roman Christian appointing a lion to look after his life insurance; predictably, nothing came of such action."¹³ However, the teachers' next attempt proved more successful. At the 1917 Alberta Education Association convention, George D. Misener, in spite of opposition, introduced three resolutions which started the young Alliance on its way. Kratzman describes the resolutions briefly:

G. D. Misener of Edmonton and C. E. Leppard of Calgary were appointed acting president and vice-president of the Alliance; a small sum of money to cover necessary initial expenses was voted from the treasury; and the two nominees were given authority to choose a general secretary-treasurer. As well, these two elected officers were assigned the task of drafting a suitable constitution for the Alliance. To assist them with this task, they chose John W. Barnett, teacher at Strathcona High School, Edmonton, as Secretary-Treasurer.¹⁴

Objectives of the Alliance

Had it not been for Barnett's courage and determination, it is quite possible that the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, frail craft that it was, might have capsized and gone under. He had often been heard to

¹³J. W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1967), p. 437.

¹⁴Kratzmann, op. cit., p. 32.

say "Give me something to aim at and I'll aim at it."¹⁵ He now had specific targets to aim at and throughout his entire career as general secretary-treasurer from 1918 to 1946 he aimed at four main objectives:

- 1) Building up membership in the Alliance.
- 2) Improving economic welfare of its members by improving salaries, pensions, housing and tenure.
- 3) Securing recognition from school boards, government, university and Department of Education officials.
- 4) Improving teachers' qualifications.

Similarities Between the N. U. T. and the A. T. A.

Basically, the struggle to achieve these aims is the story of the growth and development of the A. T. A. A comparison of Barnett's objectives with those of the N. U. T. reveals many similarities such as (1) educational objectives, (2) official organs, (3) government recognition, (4) professionalism versus trade unionism.

It is the writer's contention that the educational objectives of Graves and Barnett were similar. Graves believed that by advancing the interests of teachers, the progress of education would be accelerated. Barnett devoted much of his time and energy to improving the lot of the downtrodden rural teacher. No distance was too great, no roads were too bad, no problem too trivial for Barnett. If a teacher

¹⁵Statement by Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968.

needed help, he did all within his power to see that help was given. Graves also believed that there was a great deal of apathy among teachers. It was his thesis that if teachers would "only call out loud enough and often enough" some of their complaints would be heard and attended to. Barnett believed the same and always encouraged teachers to make their demands known. When they did, he was never too busy to listen.

Another similarity between the N. U. T. and the A. T. A. may be noted in the publication of a magazine. The N. U. T. began printing The Schoolmaster soon after its initial organization took place and it was published weekly as early as 1872. Barnett continued to subscribe to this periodical for many years after he came to Alberta and there is no doubt that he used it as a model for the Alberta teachers' magazine. In the July, 1920 issue of the A. T. A. Magazine, Barnett quoted two letters from The Schoolmaster to overcome the inertia of getting a Symposium started. His purpose was to generate interest in the exchange of ideas on the teacher status problem, by encouraging people to write letters to be printed in the Symposium Column and thus help to disseminate the idea that teaching was a profession.

Another common problem of the two groups was attempting to secure recognition from the government. Both groups felt that effective representation of educational interests in parliament was necessary in order to ensure that legislation favorable to teachers would be passed.

Shortly after its organization, the Union appointed a Parliamentary Committee whose function it was to influence Parliament by means of deputations and interviews. Tropp states that by 1900 three of the N.U.T. leaders Gray, Yoxall and Macnamara -- all gifted speakers, were elected to the House of Commons and were pressing the views of the Union in the House.¹⁶ In 1931 two of the leaders of the Union were again members and 414 Union members were sitting on local education committees.¹⁷ Several teachers became members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 1935 when the Social Credit Government came into power. Indeed, some teacher members even became cabinet members. However, the situation which was to affect education to the greatest degree was that the new Premier and Minister of Education Mr. Aberhart, was an ex-high school principal. It was now anticipated that the government would recognize the professional aspirations of the teachers.

There has always been a certain degree of ambivalence within both the N.U.T. and the A.T.A. with regard to professionalism versus trade unionism. Although the influence of labor unions was quite strong in the early years of the Alliance's history, the founders avoided the error of including the word "union" in the name of their organization.

¹⁶Tropp, op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁷Percy, op. cit., p. 278.

Chalmers states that one of the speakers at the 1918 Annual General Meeting of the Alliance was a member of the American Federation of Teachers who urged Albertans to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor as his group had done. Even though nothing came of the suggestion, it is a well known fact that the A. T. A. has been greatly influenced by the philosophy and techniques of the labor movement. The N. U. T., by including the word "union" in its name has laid itself open to doubt in the minds of some. At its first conference in 1870, a representative from the Nottingham Teachers' Association proposed that the N. U. T. should be organized on the principles of trade unionism, but "without those objectionable features which had made a limited number of those institutions odious to the country." These Nottingham Resolutions were accepted by the 1872 conference of the N. U. T. and resulted in the resignation of W. Lawson, the secretary. In his letter of resignation, he wrote that "the uneasy feeling that is now abroad respecting strikes and combinations has caused grave suspicion in many quarters."¹⁸ However, the Union continued to operate on the non-militant guidelines which had been set forth by the 1870 conference, the only concession made being that members agreed to the accumulation of a reserve fund and to the appointment of a paid secretary. At the same time, hostility between the teachers' Union and a large

¹⁸Tropp, op. cit., p. 112.

section of the middle classes was forcing the teachers into greater co-operation with the working class associations. The 1895 conference of the N. U. T. turned down a proposal to affiliate with the Trades Union Congress but two years later agreed to send financial help to striking quarry workers at Penrhyn.¹⁹ Furthermore, The Schoolmaster reported in 1893 that various district associations had attempted to work with trades councils and in 1922 the National Association of Primary School Teachers at Birmingham did affiliate with the T. U. C. The N. U. T. has never become directly affiliated with the T. U. C. but in 1942 the two groups did work together in order to secure "immediate legislation to provide equality of educational opportunity for all children and thus ensure that they should be equipped for a full life and democratic citizenship."²⁰

The N. U. T. and the A. T. A. are similar to regular trade unions in that they are both concerned with the working conditions of their members. Moreover, both groups attempt to obtain their rights by exerting pressure. In the past, the N. U. T. has exerted pressure on the Education Department, on parliament, and on the employers in order to improve working conditions.²¹ As stated

¹⁹Ibid., p. 150.

²⁰Ibid., p. 240.

²¹Ibid., p. 137.

earlier, the improvement of the economic welfare of teachers has been one of the four main objects of the A. T. A. and certainly this is what Barnett labored long and diligently to accomplish. Working conditions for teachers are extremely important as the strain in teaching is very high. That class load is one of the chief factors related to strain, is recognized by most educators. As early as 1918 the Executive Council of the A. T. A. passed a resolution stating that the Minister of Education be informed that the A. T. A. recommended that the class load not exceed 35 in graded schools or 25 in ungraded schools.

Differences Between the N. U. T. and the A. T. A.

Fewer differences than similarities between these two organizations are apparent. The chief difference noted is unity in Alberta as opposed to sectionalism in Britain. As mentioned previously, the N. U. T. is only one of many British teachers' associations which are organized according to sex (masters and mistresses), grade taught (primary, elementary, secondary) or type of school (Church School, Board School, University) whereas in Alberta and western Canada generally, the trend has been for all teachers to belong to the same group. For Alberta teachers, there is only one provincial organization, the A. T. A. and one national group, the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

Summary

From the foregoing remarks, it is evident that Barnett used his

knowledge of the British teachers' organization in the development of the Alliance. The influence of the N. U. T. is much in evidence on every hand. In referring to the N. U. T. McNab says:

This progressive teachers' organization in Britain seems to have served as a model for the Alberta Teachers' Alliance both in its constitution and in the formulation of its policies. Although the Alberta association adopted some of the terminology of the American Teachers' Federation in the establishment of Locals and later Sub-Locals and was for a time forced to use organizers in the extension of its membership, it steered its course away from any affiliation with organized labor, towards the goal of a purely professional organization recognized by the government.²²

Although some consideration had been given by the Executive Council to affiliation with labor as stated above, nothing came of it, chiefly because Barnett was opposed to it. The 1919 A. G. M. had instructed the general secretary to prepare a report on the matter, but this directive, no doubt, got 'lost' in Barnett's files as the following quotation from Powell's memoir suggests:

On occasion . . . John would be confronted in Annual General Meeting or in Executive session with an instruction or an order which he could not argue down and had to accept. If he did not like it as an A. T. A. policy, he would bury it in the files.²³

Kratzmann also acknowledges the American influence on the A. T. A. to a certain extent, and states that "The major influences on the A. T. A. apart from the catalytic conditions in Alberta came from abroad. The

²² K. McNab, "A History of the Alberta Teachers' Association," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1949, p. 9.

²³ Powell, op. cit., p. 31.

AFT in the U.S. was creating appealing headlines at the time, and the accomplishments of the British National Union of Teachers were being propagandized by immigrant British teachers. John Barnett, an Englishman, was named as first secretary of the A. T. A. and he left an indelible imprint upon the organization after thirty years of forthright and dedicated service."²⁴

²⁴A. Kratzmann, "A Vision Vindicated," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV (March, 1964), p. 289.

CHAPTER IV

BUILDING UP MEMBERSHIP IN THE A. T. A.

The Situation in 1917

Barnett was a man of vision. In 1917, when the organization of teachers was formed, he saw the necessity of improving conditions for teachers. He also saw how it could be done. He believed that in order to improve the economic welfare of teachers, it was necessary to build up a strong and viable institution. The broader the membership base the greater would be the influence of the Alliance — this was Barnett's thesis. He therefore determined to bring as many teachers as possible into the fold and it is safe to say that he dedicated nearly 20 years of his life to this cause. However, many factors combined to make the task difficult: teachers' lack of money, their fear of retaliation from irate school boards, and their general apathy. Faced with odds like these, a man of lesser determination would have given up, but not John Barnett.

During the first year of its life from Easter 1917 to Easter 1918, the Alliance enrolled 797 members; two years later in 1920, membership had more than doubled to 1763.¹ Of this number, however, some

¹Alberta Teachers' Alliance, The A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXII (December, 1951), p. 13.

350 were prospective teachers only — normal school students, whom Barnett diligently enlisted as provisional members. Powell tells of one of his trips for this purpose to the Camrose Normal School:

Barnett makes his appeal on sound philosophical grounds, then offers recruit membership at one dollar per student. He expounds the provincial A. T. A. policy of a minimum salary of \$1000 per year, and urges all the students to accept no less. Before closing his address he obtains from the floor the names of five students who are to be the executive of the Camrose Normal School local. A future president of the provincial Alliance is one of the five. When the assembly is dismissed, John meets this executive and gives it a forty minute briefing.²

As Powell has indicated, many of these provisional members who paid their \$1.00 fee remained members in good standing when they graduated and entered the classrooms of Alberta. In 1920, the 1763 members made up about one third of the province's teachers since at this time there were approximately 4289 classrooms in operation. A year later Barnett claimed that two thirds of the province's teachers were members, but in 1923 the membership had increased to only 2204 which would be slightly more than 50% provided no new classrooms were opened.³ Lack of any spectacular gain was no doubt due to higher fees and hard times after the war.

The provisional constitution of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance

²A. J. H. Powell, "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance," (Unpublished memoir, 1962), p. 10.

³A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXII (December, 1951), p. 13.

stated that membership in the organization was open to "any person directly interested in education" but the founders soon realized their error. Accordingly, the first Annual General Meeting of April, 1918 modified the constitution by stating that only those persons who held a valid Alberta teaching certificate and who were employed by a public or separate public school system could qualify for membership in the A. T. A.⁴ Thus they hoped to exclude clergymen, permit teachers and all other uncertified personnel.

The first A. G. M. not only revised membership qualifications but also raised fees from 35¢ to 75¢ per year. But the Executive Council soon saw that even this amount would have to be increased considerably if an effective membership campaign were to be carried on. Consequently the 1919 A. G. M. passed a resolution approving the following schedule of membership fees:

Annual salary	Annual fee
Less than \$1000	\$ 2.00
\$1000 but less than \$2000	\$ 4.00
\$2000 or more	\$ 5.00 ⁵

In spite of this increase which more than doubled the existing fees, it was still necessary for the Alberta Education Association to subsidize the A. T. A. During the next year Barnett worked harder than ever to

⁴Alberta Teachers' Alliance, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, April 2, 1918.

⁵Ibid., April 19, 1919.

increase membership but he was still not satisfied with the results. At the 1920 A. G. M. a resolution was passed adopting the slogan "Every teacher in Alberta a member of the A. T. A."⁶ with the hope that this would induce teachers to join.

Organizing a Membership Campaign

The Alliance and Barnett continued to work hard, but no matter how much effort and energy they expended, they did not get the desired result. It therefore became evident that more efficient methods would have to be employed. Accordingly, in the fall of 1919, the Executive Council of the Alliance decided to employ an organizer whose job it would be to contact as many teachers as possible and persuade them to become members. This Provincial Organizer, F. C. King of Edson, commenced duties on October 2, 1919 for a period of two and one half months at a salary of \$1250.⁷ Financial difficulties entailed therewith were overcome by the generosity and faith of a few of the Edmonton and Calgary teachers who signed notes enabling the Alliance to borrow money from the bank.⁸

⁶A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (Sept.-Oct., 1920), p. 7.

⁷Alberta Teachers' Alliance, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, September 23, 1919.

⁸J. W. Barnett, "A Brief Historic Record of The Association, " Members' Handbook (Edmonton: The Alberta Teachers' Association, 1968), p. 9.

At the same meeting, it was decided that the province should be divided into seven districts to facilitate the campaign. These districts were to consist of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and the towns of Stettler, Red Deer, Wainwright, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge plus the area surrounding each. By 1919 approximately one third of the province's teachers had joined the A. T. A. but well over half of these were city teachers and much recruiting work in rural areas was yet to be done. Barnett soon discovered that the best method of contacting the largest number of rural teachers with the least effort and expense was to attend each district's convention. Powell summarizes briefly:

And of course the Fall conventions were covered. Many of them John attended himself, making his appeal and setting up two or three executives to foster Locals in the small towns. He would personally canvass all the teachers in attendance. To other conventions he would send teacher-agents from the Executive — people like Harry Ainlay, Harry Clarke and A. J. H. Powell. These had varying success in collecting dues, but as the years went on they blanketed Alberta with news of the Alliance and what it was doing.⁹

It was one thing to convince the teachers they should join, but it was another thing to get them to pay their fees. No doubt the increase in dues and the depression after the war both contributed to their reluctance. Gradually as more and more Locals were organized in the hinterland of the province, membership of rural teachers increased. But this was a slow process — hampered chiefly because of

⁹Powell, op. cit., p. 12.

difficulties in transportation. Even so, one year later in June of 1920, Barnett reported that between 79 and 86 Locals had been established.¹⁰

John Barnett was a great organizer and this ability enabled him to build up the membership in spite of numerous obstacles. He organized his recruitment campaign by delegating his authority not only to Executive members but also to rural teachers. C.O. Hicks, a past president of the Alliance, tells how he went about this:

In every town and hamlet in Alberta John sought out teachers who were willing and able to speak at meetings and enroll new paid up members.¹¹

Hicks goes on to explain that these teachers were the old reliables whom Barnett affectionately referred to as his 'Good Boys'. To quote further:

When John had assigned you a task and you had proved able and reliable you became a 'Good Boy'. This was John's highest appellation for teachers rendering distinguished service to the A. T. A.¹²

Problems of Recruitment

Once John Barnett became convinced of the importance of a project, he concentrated all his energies on carrying it out. In one

¹⁰J. W. Barnett, "Third Annual Report of the General Secretary-Treasurer," The A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (June, 1920), p. 21.

¹¹C. O. Hicks, "Reminiscences" (Unpublished memoir, February, 1967), p. 15.

¹²Ibid., p. 15.

sense he was a gambler. He would always take a chance on getting to a meeting even though roads were practically impassable and he had been advised not to attempt the journey. He seemed tireless and after a long enervating trip would arrive at the meeting cheerful and buoyant, exuding a confidence and enthusiasm that never failed to be infectious. However, the trip home was often another matter. Ainlay and Lazerte both testify in their writings of Barnett's proclivity to fall asleep behind the wheel of his old Gray Dort. Of one of these return trips, Ainlay notes:

We drove through Leduc and on the old trail came to the intersection and a blind road where we were supposed to turn right over the tracks.

John went straight ahead. We were sure he went to sleep and drove into a shallow ditch and up against a fence.¹³

Lazerte tells of a trip home from Innisfail one night after a meeting:

John was pressing on the accelerator a little more than usual. I remarked only once that I wasn't in a hurry and heard John's reply, 'I could drive this with my eyes shut. I've been over this highway hundreds of times.' About ten minutes later, I thought that probably he was testing the truth of his statement when the car refused to follow the turn in the road.¹⁴

No further explanation is given, but apparently the driver woke up in time to avert a catastrophe. At the time that Barnett was travelling the most, the roads of rural Alberta were hardly more than prairie

¹³H. D. Ainlay, (Unpublished and undated memoir), p. 4.

¹⁴M. E. Lazerte, "The Development of the A. T. A." (Unpublished memoir, 1967), p. 8.

trails and a trip from Edmonton to Calgary was an all day expedition. Even this main thoroughfare was not hard-surfaced until after most of his safaris were past history. Country roads taxed the skill and ingenuity of even the most intrepid drivers. Powell gives us an interesting description of those roads:

Cross-country driving could be heaven or hell, depending on the weather. In a dry summer with the road well dragged, the going was good so long as one kept ahead of the other fellow's dust. One took the right-angled turns slowly, for there were Death Corners of dreadful repute in those days and one met or passed carefully skirting the soft-shouldered ditch.

But in the spring thaw or a rainy spell there was nothing to mitigate the sheer misery of driving on the Alberta secondary roads, unless it was a mile or two of sandy road here and there. Put on your chains, grind your way through, stay out of the ditch if you could.¹⁵

If roads were unpredictable, cars were even more so. Overheated motors, boiling radiators, flat tires, magneto trouble along with the discomforts of open touring cars all combined to take the joys out of motoring. No doubt Barnett had to contend with all these car troubles and many more. However, the pièce de résistance is described in the following quotation from Lazerte:

. . . . When we were returning to Spirit River from Fairview our car developed engine trouble just as we approached the town garage. We stopped for help. The station attendant remarked that the car might operate better if we had a gas tank. The tank had dropped off a little distance down the street but the reserve gas in the carburetor had carried us into town. We retraced our

¹⁵Powell, op. cit., p. 9.

path and recovered the gas tank. What a story we now had! On first telling the gas tank was found a mile down the road. After the story had been told and re-told many times, it appeared that the tank had dropped off near Dunvegan but John's speed sufficed to carry us to Spirit River.¹⁶

Stories like these soon become legends with repetition, and contribute to the organization's traditions which accumulate as the years pass. At the same time, they provide a valuable record of the past and give an insight into the problems faced by organization builders. But these external frustrations were minor ones compared to the internal problems that plagued the Alliance in its attempt to build up membership. The apathy of many teachers and the constant turnover in personnel were more difficult to cope with than the physical problems of roads and cars. Many teachers could not see the value of joining an organization which demanded the payment of fees and seemed to offer no concrete, immediate benefits in return. Many of the rural teachers were very young. Some had only a Grade X education with no teacher training and thus were not eligible for membership in the A. T. A. Many teachers felt they could not afford the membership fee and others had no intention of continuing in the classroom. Powell explains the situation:

In those early days, while city teaching staffs had become pretty well stablized, the rural and village teachers were still a very transient lot. They passed through Normal School, taught just long enough to repay their government loan, then married or

¹⁶ Lazerte, op. cit., p. 8.

went into other activities. (In those days it was considered unthinkable for a married woman - unless widowed or divorced - to hold a teaching job.) The average teaching career of those in rural and village areas was thus from two to three years. This meant that the task of indoctrinating the teaching body with professional solidarity had to be pursued without pause in order to gain recruits in place of the annual exodus.¹⁷

For these reasons, then, it was essential that Barnett spend three months every fall travelling in rural Alberta soliciting memberships. The most amazing aspect of the persistent growth of the Alliance was that this was mainly the accomplishment of one man whose determination and perseverance never flagged. Barnett was a man of tremendous mental and physical reserve which he consistently channelled into his duties as General Secretary. Although he suffered many rebuffs and setbacks, he never lost sight of his goal. Building up the membership of the Alliance became an obsession with him and it is probable that his feat of association building has never been equalled. During the Thirties when Barnett was proselyting most extensively, other teachers' groups in western Canada were also struggling for their lives. Powell tells us how they fared:

In Saskatchewan the effort was made for some years, but the S. T. A. died during the Great Depression. In Manitoba the M. T. F. rode on the shoulders of Winnipeg with rural teachers remaining in outer darkness. The B. C. T. F. was carried by Vancouver and Victoria, but reached out with much more vigour to the hinterland teachers.¹⁸

¹⁷Powell, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 6.

The failure of the Saskatchewan group is no doubt attributable, at least in part, to the lack of leadership. No Barnett came forth to light their way. Powell says that the Alberta Teachers' Alliance would have met the same fate if it hadn't been for Barnett:

There was no rest or surcease for John Barnett during those 20 years. If he had once balked at that long, exhausting Fall campaign, the young Alliance would have died.¹⁹

Other forces of opposition which militated against growth and development of the A. T. A. were the school boards. In the early years, it seemed as if the battle lines were drawn with the Alliance and Barnett on the side of the teachers and the school trustees against them. In a statement in the A. T. A. Magazine, Buxton notes that, 'Before 1939 the master-servant relationship which trustees foisted off on teaching staffs was unbelievable.'²⁰ Many boards were unsympathetic, unscrupulous and a few were downright hostile in their treatment of teachers. But they were even more antagonistic to the Alliance and John Barnett. Some boards discouraged teachers from joining the Alliance by fair means or foul. Recruiting of new members was hampered by teacher advertisements which read 'No A. T. A. members need apply.'²¹ Many timid young school teachers hesitated to

¹⁹Ibid., p. 13.

²⁰A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XLIX (Sept. - Oct., 1968), p. 33.

²¹J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968), p. 27.

commit themselves to action which might jeopardize their chances of obtaining a school. Most of the quarrels between the Alliance and trustees involved rural school boards and originated over tenure and salaries. Occasionally these quarrels could not be resolved without going to court, but more frequently the Alliance would content itself with putting the recalcitrant school district on the blacklist which Newland as president in 1921 explained as follows:

Whenever one of our members complains of the action of any board and asks for protection, or seeks advice in regard to any dispute with a board, we forthwith endeavour to obtain the board's side of the case by a communication through our General Secretary or our solicitors. Occasionally we have the advantage of a personal interview. Our earnest desire is to have the fullest information on both sides of every case. If, now, the board refuses to answer our communication or to have anything to do with the Alliance or its representatives, we simply report the circumstances to our members for their guidance and protection. That is all.²²

Blacklisting was a powerful weapon for the teachers and as long as the Alliance did not get involved in libellous or slanderous cases, the school boards were impotent. The trustees opposed the Alliance with such vehemence because they also foresaw that this body would increase operating expenses of their schools. But often, personal considerations entered the picture, such as the dismissal of a teacher in order to make the position available to a relative or friend of a school board member. In this connection, Powell relates:

²² Alberta School Trustees' Association, Annual Report of Convention (Feb. 2 - 3, 1921).

John Barnett's classical example was that of a young teacher who was dismissed to make room for the daughter of Trustee B; an agreement having been reached that Chairman C's herd should have the services of Trustee B's pedigree bull when the appointment was made.²³

Thus some teachers hesitated to join an organization which ostensibly was in opposition to their employers, the trustees.

Membership in the Alliance continued to increase in spite of the attempts of trustees and government officials to undermine the teachers' faith in their organization. All activities of the A. T. A. were designed to raise the status of the profession so that it would receive official recognition from the government and other organizations. The opposition which the A. T. A. faced acted as a spur to its development. An editorial in the A. T. A. Magazine gives Barnett's thoughts on this matter:

John W. Barnett, The Alberta Teachers' Association first general secretary, often said that the phenomenal growth of our organization was sparked by antipathy shown to the A. T. A. in its early years. Indeed, Dr. Barnett's historical account of our development during the years 1918 to 1946 is largely a record of an unending, unremitting struggle for status, both professional and economic.²⁴

The Quarrel with G. P. Smith

The antipathy to which Barnett was referring was spearheaded by the Liberal Minister of Education, the Hon. G. P. Smith, who

²³ Powell, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁴ The A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXVIII (December, 1957), p. 4.

succeeded Boyle in 1918. Almost immediately, the A.T.A. ran into trouble with the new Minister. By 1919, the Alliance was openly censuring the Department of Education for its action in continuing a short four-month teacher training course after it had agreed with the other western provinces to institute a teacher training period of no less than one full academic year. A year later the conflict was still raging over interference by the Department in teacher-school board relations. A 1920 executive council resolution stated "That the Alberta Teachers' Alliance protest against the Department of Education interfering in cases where a contract favorable to the teacher and mutually agreed upon by teacher and school board has been signed, provided such contract is not inconsistent with the provisions of the School Ordinance or the Regulations of the Department of Education."²⁵ Apparently Smith could not accept the fact that teachers were professional people capable of conducting their own affairs efficiently. His interference in this matter of contracts was just one more indication that relationships between the Alliance and the Department were deteriorating. Barnett, apprehensive of the effects of Smith's tactics on membership, retaliated by printing the following stirring plea to the teachers on the front cover of the first issue of the A.T.A. Magazine:

²⁵ Alberta Teachers' Alliance, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, Jan. 18, 1920.

Are you a member of the A. T. A. ? Do you meet persons who express doubts about the propriety of teachers' organizations and who advise you to keep clear of anything so banal or "common" as a "union"? Mark those persons. They are your enemies. They fear organization, much preferring that you remain what you are, an individual powerless to resist domination. Magistri neque servi.²⁶

By printing this message Barnett hoped to win the support of more teachers and thus increase membership in the Alliance. But at the same time, he was informing G. P. Smith and the Department that the Alliance was not to be intimidated. The result was open warfare between the A. T. A. (as represented by Barnett and Newland) and the Minister. Smith did not believe that this statement represented the true feelings of the teachers as a whole and must surely be the "personal biases of the fire-breathing general secretary, John W. Barnett, or of the newly appointed brilliant little editor and president of the Alliance, Hubert C. Newland."²⁷ He, therefore, had the temerity to intimate as much on the public platform. Speaking to a joint meeting of Inspectors and Normal School Instructors, Smith criticized T. E. A. Stanley, H. C. Newland and J. W. Barnett calling them a "handful of radicals" who were "knowingly misleading" the teachers of the province.²⁸ These accusations led to the unparalleled

²⁶ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (June, 1920), front cover.

²⁷ J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968), p. 33.

²⁸ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. II (March, 1922), p. 19.

procedure on the part of the A. T. A. of passing a resolution stating "That the Executive send a letter of censure to the Minister of Education for abusing the General Secretary-Treasurer and making disparaging remarks in public places about the other members of the Executive of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance."²⁹

Smith next attempted to prove his point by appealing directly to the teachers themselves at conventions but found that his criticisms of the officers of the Alliance were not very enthusiastically received. The teachers whole-heartedly and solidly backed their association and its Executive and made it plain that only the A. T. A. could speak for them. Smith's antagonism towards the Alliance proved to have the opposite effect to what he had hoped. The external criticism served as a uniting force rather than a disruptive one, and resulted in greater consolidation of the organization.

Smith was not easily discouraged and his failure only served to goad him on. After failing to indoctrinate the teachers with his educational ideas, he decided to enlist the support of the school trustees' association. Here, surely, was an organization which would align itself with him and the department against the teachers and their association. The trustees had had an organization as early as 1907 but it was never a very vigorous institution and during World War I,

²⁹A. T. A., Executive Council Minutes, Nov. 6, 1920.

it became defunct. Smith now directed his energies towards reviving this organization. In 1919, their first meeting after the War was held with only about 50 delegates.³⁰ But in 1921, as a result of Smith's proselyting,³¹ between 1300 and 1400 delegates were assembled. Ostensibly, they were there to discuss collective bargaining, but, 'the implicit purpose of the gathering was the eradication of the A. T. A.'³²

As was customary, the president of the A. T. A., H. C. Newland, was invited to address the delegates. His calm, reasonable presentation included an explanation of the detested blacklist among other matters of common interest to the Alliance and to trustees. Smith spoke later and devoted a large part of his talk to a diatribe condemning the Alliance for its stand on the blacklist, for its insistence on a teacher's right to choose his own representative in dismissal appeals, for its position regarding a provincial salary schedule and collective bargaining, and for its demand to be recognized as the official spokesman of all the teachers. With regard to the latter Smith said "Certain members of this organization wanted more than recognition. They wanted domination. They wanted the Department to abdicate and the School Boards to follow suit."³³

³⁰Calgary Herald, November 11, 1919, p. 25.

³¹See Appendix C for copies of Ross's and Smith's letters to trustees.

³²Chalmers, op. cit., p. 35.

³³A. S. T. A., Convention (February, 1921).

Perhaps Smith was sincere in his criticism even if misguided. It is possible that he might have done a great deal more damage to the Alliance if fate had not intervened and removed him from his position of authority. A subsequent speech two months later to the A. E. A. delivered in a more amicable mood, proved to be his last public address, for a short time later, his party met with defeat at the polls. It is debatable whether he did the Alliance more harm than good. Chalmers contends his opposition strengthened the Alliance. He states "Probably few men had as much influence as he in building up the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, for his savage and unremitting opposition to the young professional organization must have convinced many teachers that only if they stood together could they hope to prevail against such hostility."³⁴ However, Barnett was convinced that Smith wanted to annihilate the Alliance and must be stopped at all costs.

The Change of Government

In an attempt to gain some control of the situation, the Alliance began meeting with the United Farmers of Alberta board of directors as early as January, 1920. Some consensus must have resulted, for soon the A. T. A. was staunchly supporting the farmers. This support even included campaigning in the forthcoming provincial election.

³⁴Chalmers, op. cit., p. 39.

Powell states that Smith "was so forthright in derision of the A. T. A. that John Barnett took counteraction. In the final days of the 1921 provincial election campaign John spent two days in the U. F. A. Camrose headquarters assisting in the fight to oust George Peter [Smith]. It may be doubted whether his help was necessary or important. The U. F. A. of course swept the province."³⁵

With the election of the U. F. A. party, the Alliance had high hopes that their relationship with the government would improve. The Alliance, in an optimistic mood, published a strong statement of policy embodied in Barnett's Manifesto of 1921.³⁶ This was a statement of the A. T. A.'s position on salaries, contracts, collective bargaining, dismissals, working conditions, professional conduct of teachers, departmental examinations, curriculum changes and various other matters affecting teachers and education generally. It seemed as if the Alliance would now be able to accomplish some of its goals. But instead of expanding during the Twenties, the Alliance found itself fighting for its life.

The Depression of the Twenties

Economic conditions were anything but favorable to expansion. Many of Alberta's settlers had homesteaded on the treeless prairies

³⁵ Powell, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁶ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. II (October, 1921), p. 7.

of the south eastern section where no land clearing was necessary. This area, known as the Palliser Triangle, had been productive enough during the war years, but during the Twenties the prairie winds whined incessantly drying the land to a crisp. The short prairie grass known as 'prairie wool' which had held the soil, was now ploughed under and dust particles drifted high into the air forming clouds which blackened the sky and left a gritty film on everything. Crops and gardens were planted each spring with the renewed hope that this year things would be better. But year after year they withered and burned when whistling winds blew away any prospects of a few drops of rain. Cattle had to be sold or practically given away when feed was no longer available and eventually many homesteaders were forced to abandon their land and seek a livelihood elsewhere. The Deputy Minister of Education, J. T. Ross, explained in his annual report why many schools were closed and taxes went unpaid:

The progress in education was affected by unfavorable financial conditions in the farming communities throughout Canada. The collapse of prices for all farm products, coupled with the high prices maintaining for all manufactured goods and machinery needed by agriculturists, made it impossible to carry on farm operations profitably. The rural districts therefore had great difficulty in collecting a sufficient amount of taxes to enable them to operate throughout all of the year.³⁷

The second factor which necessitated the curtailment of plans

³⁷ J. T. Ross, Annual Report, Department of Education, 1922, p. 11.

for expansion in the A. T. A. was the new government. Although a new Minister of Education, the Hon. Perren Baker, was now in office, the Deputy Minister, J. T. Ross, was still in charge and according to Powell, Baker was taking his cue from his deputy who had been well indoctrinated against the A. T. A. by Smith. Powell gives this account of the situation:

Moreover, Baker did not mistake the feelings of his deputy about this upstart Alliance. He therefore never allowed himself any expression of warmth or approval towards our organization until the last years of the Brownlee government.³⁸

Barnett was particularly bitter towards the Deputy Minister, John Ross, because he felt that Baker might have been more sympathetic to the A. T. A. if Ross had not influenced him. The animosity between the Deputy Minister and the Alliance continued until Ross's retirement. A letter by Powell gives us an interesting side light:

In 1930 an honorary doctorate was awarded by the University [of Alberta] to John T. Ross upon his retirement^(a) [sic] after many years as Deputy Minister of Education. The A. T. A. was informally approached to buy the doctoral robes for him. However, Mr. Ross's demeanour toward the Alliance had been so consistently cold and disdainful that John [Barnett] and Cedric [Hicks] would have none of it, and Mr. Ross got his robe elsewhere.³⁹

Thus it seemed that the Alliance was still fighting a losing battle.

³⁸ Powell, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁹ A. J. H. Powell, letter to S. C. T. Clarke, Jan. 25, 1967.

(a) Ross did not retire until 1934.

Barnett now realized that the only hope for the survival of the Alliance lay in strengthening the organization from within. He therefore decided to dedicate his energies to what he considered the most urgent problem — that of increasing the membership of the organization.

Membership Campaign Revitalized

The Executive Council of the A. T. A. was deeply concerned about the effects of the vicious propaganda which Smith and Ross had promulgated. Barnett was particularly sensitive about it and set out immediately to counteract if possible the effects of Smith's damaging maneuvers. He felt that positive procedures must be undertaken to inform the teachers and the public at large as to the true nature and purpose of the A. T. A. Therefore at the 1922 A. G. M. a resolution was passed setting up a committee which was designed to restore the confidence of the teachers in the Alliance and thus ultimately increase the membership. The committee presented three proposals:

- 1) That a competition in securing new members be organized among the locals.
- 2) That the Executive be empowered to encourage the organization of Provincial Locals with as low a membership as three and that these locals be represented at the A. G. M. on the basis of one delegate for at least six members, if necessary representing two locals.
- 3) That the Executive divide the province into districts for the purpose of more thorough organization and endeavor to secure suitable teachers who would be willing to devote a portion of their time to securing new members on a commission basis.⁴⁰

⁴⁰A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. II (May, 1922), p. 13.

Barnett asked the secretaries of the locals to supply him with the names of "organizers" who would be willing to act in this capacity.

The plan proved fairly successful and at the Executive Council meeting in December, 1922, Barnett reported that there had been an increase of more than 500 members.

But still Barnett was not satisfied with those results. Methods of recruitment were too haphazard and informal. In his report to the A. G. M. in March, 1923, he suggested that if any further gains were to be made, more thorough, more efficient methods would be necessary. Accordingly the A. G. M. delegates adopted a resolution giving the Executive the power to employ organizers at certain times of the year. In 1925, the Executive adopted the policy of keeping paid organizers working on memberships on a commission basis as had been first suggested in 1922. However, now they were to be kept in the field on a year round basis. This plan proved expensive, but the increase in memberships justified the expense. By 1926 Barnett announced that all previous membership records had been broken.⁴¹ Through his efforts this voluntary organization had grown from approximately 2000 to 3000 members in the span of a decade. Four years later, in 1930 Barnett claimed that the A. T. A. was then the strongest organization of teachers in Canada with the exception of the

⁴¹A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. VI (April, 1926), p. 9.

Women Teachers of Ontario.⁴²

The Great Depression

But with the Thirties came the Great Depression, ushered in with the collapse of the stock markets of the world in October, 1929. Albertans did not really begin to feel the effects of it until 1931, carried along as they were by the bountiful wheat crop of 1928 and by their innate enthusiasm and confidence. But by 1932, the whole province was in the depths of depression and despair. High schools became overcrowded with young men and women who were returning to complete their education because they could not get jobs. In spite of this, few if any new classrooms were opened — existing staffs simply became more overburdened. Rural schools were closed by the dozen, some never to be opened again. Teachers by the hundreds were unemployed and even those who were teaching often waited several months before they could collect their salaries. Powell states:

In 1936-37 when William Aberhart as Premier and Minister of Education, and George F. McNally as Deputy Minister were pushing through the great reorganization of rural Alberta in school divisions, it was estimated that rural teachers of the province were owed more than \$400,000 in long-overdue salaries.⁴³

Many young men who could not afford to go back to school and whose parents could not feed them, gathered in gangs and drifted back and

⁴²A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. X (May, 1930), p. 5.

⁴³Powell, op. cit., p. 15.

forth across the country looking for work. Parents became desperate in their attempts to feed and clothe their children. Those who lived in towns or cities envied the farmers who at least had milk, butter, eggs and chickens to eat. The small-town merchants envied the C.N.R. section crew whose wages provided a steady income. As many as could get 'relief' were receiving it. Others welcomed R.B. Bennett's free cheese and smoked herring to stave off the pangs of hunger.

Teaching Profession Act

And through these long, hard years of tight money, Barnett still pressed on with his membership campaign. At the height of the depression in 1933, he reported that 3362 teachers were members of the Alliance.⁴⁴ In spite of inauspicious relationships with the U.F.A. government, the general secretary was negotiating for the passage of a bill which would make membership in the Alliance automatic and bring the organization more into line with other professions such as law, medicine and dentistry. The Brownlee government was reluctant, stating that the administration of such an act would entail great expense and that teachers were not in favor of compulsory membership. When a plebiscite of all teachers was taken in 1934, it was found that they were so overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal that the

⁴⁴A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXII (December, 1951), p. 13.

plebiscite had seemed a waste of money.⁴⁵ The government's objection to the cost of compulsory membership was overcome when the A. T. A. agreed to assume any extra expense entailed. Probably another factor which favored the Alliance was the retirement, in October, 1934, of the antagonistic Deputy Minister Ross. This may have accounted for Baker's sudden change of heart which Powell notes:

The declining years of the U. F. A. administration (1934-35) were years of sheer frustration for the Alliance. The best efforts of their Executives had only partially stemmed the economic debacle for the teachers; one by one their small legal gains in security of tenure were annulled. To the A. T. A. it seemed that every interest of the teachers was being torn away to appease the U. F. A. caucus, angry and distraught at the loss of its leader and Premier, John E. Brownlee. Then the Hon. Perren Baker came forward with a proposal which rocked us all by its sheer unexpectedness. He would introduce a Teaching Profession Bill which would establish the A. T. A. as the legal entity of the teachers of Alberta, on a par with the medical, dental and legal professions.⁴⁶

Thus The Teaching Profession Act was introduced into the Legislature in the spring of 1935. Barnett believed sincerely that there would be little opposition if any, to the bill as it did not involve any curriculum changes; it did not involve any increase in public taxation; nor did it affect Department of Education policies. But he was wrong. Opposition from rural trustees proved so strong that the act was finally

⁴⁵ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XV (October, 1934), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Powell, op. cit., p. 26.

presented as a private bill rather than a government bill in order to allow a free vote on it. The bill finally passed by the slim majority of 25 to 23, but only after it was amended as follows:

- 1) The name of the organization was changed from the Alberta Teachers' Alliance to the Alberta Teachers' Association.
- 2) The automatic or compulsory membership requirement was deleted.
- 3) Power to discipline members was also removed.⁴⁷

Barnett was infuriated but not speechless. What incensed him most was the fact that the compulsory membership clause was turned down chiefly because the members of the legislature who were also members of other professional groups had voted against it. Barnett gave vent to his fury in an editorial in the May issue of the A. T. A. Magazine:

"I Am Holier Than Thou"

As one listened to the debates on The Teaching Profession Act, 1935, one could not but be impressed by the members of the Legislature who happened to be members of other professional organizations. Hon. Mr. Lymburn the Attorney-General, the ex-premier, J. E. Brownlee, K. C., and Mr. W. R. Howson, K. C., were notable exceptions. Prominent among those leading the attack were L. A. Giroux, barrister, member for Grouard; Dr. W. A. Atkinson, medical doctor, member for Edmonton; Normand Hindsley, Chartered Accountant, member for Calgary; F. C. Moyer, K. C., member for Drumheller. Not one of the other 'professional' men, members of the House, voted in favour of the main principle of the Bill - that of requiring membership

⁴⁷A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XV (May, 1935), p. 3.

in the professional organization as a condition of practice.⁴⁸

The passing of the Bill accomplished little more than the changing of the organization's name. John Barnett was bitterly disappointed but had to be content with having at least gained for the Alberta Teachers' Association full statutory recognition as a professional body.

Election of Social Credit Government

As the Depression worsened, people began to lose faith in the government and in the financial system. By 1934 many Albertans had reconciled themselves to the utter failure of the capitalistic system and had begun to look for an alternative. Some embraced the new socialist program of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. A few even turned to communism. Alberta was ripe for the panacea which Social Credit offered when Aberhart began his radio campaign to promulgate his political ideas. Referring to Aberhart, Chalmers says, "the seed he broadcast fell on fertile ground."⁴⁹ Although economic conditions were probably of greatest importance, McHenry gives some emphasis to the charismatic appeal that Aberhart apparently possessed for the voters. He states:

The Hon. William Aberhart was a remarkable man. This Calgary school principal had built up a great following by his extracurricu-

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁹ J. W. Chalmers, Schools of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1967), p. 96.

lar activities, chiefly lay preaching in the Bible Institute of Calgary. He had an unusually persuasive radio voice and he kept telling the people of Alberta the things they wanted to hear. In 1935 he promised, in addition to the \$25 per month dividend, to establish a new credit mechanism, to lend money without interest, to end unemployment, and to establish new industries in the province.⁵⁰

Whether the success of Social Credit in the election was due to its theories, its leader, or depression despair is impossible to determine. Nevertheless, in the 1935 election, the scandal-ridden U.F.A. government suffered an ignominious defeat when it lost every seat.

Amendments to the Teaching Profession Act

The new government began at once to enact legislation effecting improvements in many areas of the educational field. General educational improvements were made possible by three circumstances: 'the Premier's control over the government and legislature, the fact that he was a successful professional teacher and school principal who knew what Alberta's educational needs were, and the further fact that many of his fellow M. L. A.'s including some members of the cabinet, were also teachers.'⁵¹ This government's amendments of 1936 to The Teaching Profession Act are, without doubt, the most important legislation ever passed in Alberta as far as the teaching profession is

⁵⁰ Dean E. McHenry, The Third Force in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 128.

⁵¹ Chalmer's, op. cit., p. 100.

concerned. These amendments, which granted compulsory membership of all practicing teachers in the Alberta Teachers' Association and gave the organization the power to discipline its members, are, by and large, responsible for the unquestionable prestige and power which the Association holds today.

Mr. Solon E. Low, member for Cardston in the new Social Credit government, has high praise for John Barnett and unreservedly gives him the credit for the spadework in connection with The Teaching Profession Act. To quote briefly:

When I went to Edmonton early in 1936 to attend my first session of the Legislature, one of the first discussions I had was with John Barnett, and the subject we discussed was a teachers' professional bill. Together, we laboured over the terms of such a bill and also over the procedure to be followed in getting it through the House. I had the supreme pleasure of piloting that bill through its various stages until it became law, but the credit for it goes to John Barnett and his associates behind the scenes who were always at my elbow and, but for whose counsel and advice, the bill might not have carried.⁵²

Summary

The importance of The Teaching Profession Act of 1935 and the amendments of 1936 cannot be too strongly stressed. Immediate benefits affected Barnett directly in that he was no longer required to expend his energies on the long, exhausting, fall-membership campaign. His time and talents could thus be channelled into other endeavors.

⁵² Solon E. Low, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 18.

Economic resources were also increased. Money which had been spent on membership recruitment was now available as well as income from the fees of new members. A third advantage was that now the Association had the power to discipline its members. The Act also provided for a committee to carry out this function and gave the Association power to enact by-laws relating to discipline, subject to the approval of the Cabinet. Teachers could no longer act unprofessionally by applying for positions which were not vacant, underbidding colleagues for vacant positions, or applying for positions with blacklisted school boards -- actions which had frustrated Barnett in his attempt to raise the professional status of the organization.

Another result of the compulsory membership amendment was that other work of the general secretary was also greatly reduced. Since all teachers would now be receiving the A. T. A. Magazine, it could be used for publishing announcements affecting all teachers, thus obviating the necessity for individual notifications. Long range benefits are more difficult to assess, but it is safe to say that the chief of these was that now the Association could speak for all teachers. It is probable that Barnett received his greatest satisfaction from the subsequent unity of action which the Association enjoyed thenceforth, since he had, on many occasions, been embarrassed by the apparent lack of unanimity. Here at last was the fulfillment of John Barnett's chief aim for the Alliance. He could now boast of an

association with 100 per cent statutory membership, an association whose voice would be influential not only in decisions regarding educational policies, but also in keeping the interests of teachers before the government and the trustees. As the spokesman for all teachers, the voice of the Association gradually changed from harsh aggression to calm assurance.

CHAPTER V

THE GOAL OF PROFESSIONALISM

Magna Carta for Teachers

In 1918 John Barnett and some far-sighted educationists founded the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. Unlike many organizations which came into being through an undefined, do-good sentimentality, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance had clearly defined objectives from its inception.

These objectives might have almost been called the teachers' Magna Carta, for on a sheet of paper John Barnett had written down: 'professional membership, security of tenure, pensions, faculty of education, professional standards, negotiated agreements and professional representation in curriculum, teacher education and other educational matters.'¹

The above statement written by H. J. M. Ross, a former Alberta Teachers' Association president, points out the objectives of the Alliance as conceived by Barnett. It is interesting to note the number of times the word professional appears in the statement and it is safe to say that professionalism was the dominant theme which motivated most of Barnett's actions.

Duties as General Secretary

When John Barnett assumed the position as full time general secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance on July 1, 1920, his salary

¹A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXVII (February, 1957), p. 27.

was \$325 per month plus travelling expenses. In addition, he was to receive \$250 per year to provide office space for the Alliance in his own home.² His duties as general secretary were also specifically outlined at this time as follows:

- 1) Take general charge of office and general administrative work.
- 2) Assume control of books of accounts.
- 3) Consult with the Executive on all matters likely to involve a change of policy or initiation of a new policy.
- 4) Keep the Executive informed on all matters pertaining to important correspondence, interviews, or peculiar conditions affecting Local Alliances.
- 5) Be responsible for the general organizing work under the direction of the Executive.
- 6) Attend meetings of teachers from time to time as might be deemed necessary.
- 7) Be guided at all times strictly in accordance with the policy laid down by the Executive at regularly called meetings.
- 8) If circumstances should arise which in the opinion of the General Secretary-Treasurer necessitated his leaving headquarters, he was to confer with the Executive before so doing.³

Barnett's Growing Power

Apparently the Executive was already having difficulty in controlling the general secretary since it felt the necessity of setting

² Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, April 7, 1920.

³Ibid.

down in such detail what his duties were to be. Barnett, a strong, self-willed personality found it difficult to take orders from others, especially if he did not agree with them. Because of his adeptness at ignoring Executive directives, as mentioned above, he was able to run the A. T. A. pretty much to his own liking. Chalmers tells how he accomplished this:

This he was able to do because of his forceful personality, his total and recognized commitment to the A. T. A., his drive and seemingly limitless energy, his undoubted ability, his ever increasing experience in A. T. A. matters, his prestige and status as one of the founding fathers of the Alliance.⁴

His tremendous power and influence were also the result of his unique position in the hierarchy. The general secretary's position is continuous, while elected officers come and go annually. Thus Barnett had special knowledge of the past, special information about the operation of the organization. He knew all the rules and routines — all the principles and practices; he knew the right people — legislators, cabinet ministers and officials in the Department of Education, the University and other teachers' organizations across Canada. It was inevitable that he became the most powerful member of the Executive. As long as Barnett was secretary, the positions of president and vice-president were only part-time jobs with the incumbents expected to carry on a full time teaching job simultaneously. So it was that 'Most

⁴J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968), p. 208.

of the time Barnett's will prevailed, bolstered as it was by his genuine friendship with many of the most influential members of the A. T. A."⁵ When he found himself in a tight spot, caught opposing the directives of the Executive Council, he was able to use his persuasive powers to outface and overcome the resistance because he "was tremendously admired and respected by his colleagues no matter how much he was persona non grata with trustees and ministers of education."⁶

Barnett's service with the A. T. A. divides itself into two periods. The first period from 1918 to 1935 was the time of struggle for recognition of the Alliance and for membership in it. During the early period, some of Barnett's time and efforts were devoted to the promotion of professional development by helping to launch the A. T. A. Magazine, the Bureau of Education and the Canadian Teachers' Federation. But teacher welfare objectives became the general secretary's greatest challenge. In reviewing the history of the A. T. A. Kratzmann notes:

. . . stability of stated organizational objectives is strongly in evidence; year after year the Association approached the Alberta government with identical requests for provisions for continuous contracts for teachers, stated reasons for dismissals, government-endorsed salary schedules which would recognize training and experience, pensions provided by teacher and govern-

⁵Ibid., p. 214.

⁶Ibid., p. 24.

ment contributions and improved working and living conditions.⁷

The second period from 1935 to 1946 was what Kratzmann refers to as the "golden years" of the Association because this was the period of the greatest number of social and economic accomplishments.

Rapid expansion of A. T. A. activities soon rendered Barnett's home office at 10701 University Avenue inadequate and more spacious accommodation was secured in the old Imperial Bank Building on Jasper Avenue. The new offices on the third floor were occupied on July 1, 1924, providing space for the Bureau of Education, the A. T. A. Publishing Company and the Alliance.⁸

Official Organ

Many of the objectives of the Association extend across both periods, having been inaugurated in the first and completed or continued in the second. Such a project was the A. T. A. Magazine. In order to become more professional, Barnett felt it was necessary for the teachers to have an official publication. Although the Alliance had to petition the Alberta Education Association for a grant of \$1000 in order to start printing, Barnett boldly went ahead. The first issue of the magazine appeared in June, 1920, and it has been published to date

⁷A. Kratzmann, "A Vision Vindicated," Phi Delta Kappan, XLV (March, 1964), p. 289.

⁸A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. V (July, 1924), p. 1.

without interruption, 'a professional project of no small magnitude.'⁹ No doubt Barnett got many of his ideas for the new periodical from The Schoolmaster, the official organ of the National Union of Teachers, which the Executive Council authorized the general secretary to subscribe to.¹⁰ One of Barnett's first jobs was Business and Advertising Editor of the magazine which served as a means of communication between the rural members and the Alliance. However, in 1925, after the altercation over the Bureau of Education, Barnett became Editor-in-Chief replacing Newland. In describing the A. T. A. Magazine, Chalmers says 'If a single objective can describe the viewpoint of the successive editors of the periodical, that word is eclectic. Everything of possible significance to Alberta teachers has appeared in its columns.'¹¹

Barnett did a great deal of writing for the magazine in the early days. Many of his articles appeared under such pseudonyms as Adamantus, Autolycus and Reflector.¹² Each month for several years there appeared a column headed Marginalia in which Barnett expressed his opinions and aired his grievances. He wrote fluently, an ability

⁹Chalmers, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁰A. T. A., Executive Council minutes, April 18, 1919.

¹¹Chalmers, op. cit., p. 78.

¹²Mrs. F. J. Edwards, personal interview, February 6, 1969.

gained from his two year stint as a reporter for the Grantham Times in England.¹³ Mary Crawford gives Dr. Newland the credit for starting the A. T. A. Magazine in 1920 and says that he provided its guiding principle Magistri Neque Servi — Masters Not Slaves.¹⁴ This motto has appeared on every edition for nearly fifty years. Though Newland gets the credit for initiating this project, Barnett must receive the credit for keeping it going.

The Bureau of Education

In 1924, when Barnett had been an Alberta resident for more than a decade, the plight of the teaching profession was still a sorry one. He describes the social and economic conditions of teachers in one of his annual reports to the Annual General Meeting as follows:

The teaching profession was in the deepest despondency. Teachers' salaries were 'cut' while other wage-earners were reaping considerable compensation for the increased cost-of-living; teachers felt themselves powerless; they were leaving the profession by hundreds because of the apparent hopelessness of things; 'permits' and letters of authority were showered like blessings on the poor; individual teachers were without any form of protection whatever against wrongful treatment, officialdom and autocracy were apparent everywhere; and those outside the profession treated teachers with a most humiliating condescension.¹⁵

¹³ J. W. Barnett, Statement of Qualifications from Barnett Papers.

¹⁴ Mary Crawford, in 'H. C. Newland, Collected Papers.' Talk given on C. K. U. A. about 1954.

¹⁵ J. W. Barnett, "Seventh Annual Report of the General Secretary-Treasurer," The A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. IV (May, 1924), p. 7.

This situation was creating an urgent problem for the Alliance. In order to combat the attitude of humiliating condescension, it was felt by Barnett that everything possible should be done to help the teachers. Therefore in December, 1922, the Executive Council decided to establish a Bureau of Education in the hope that such a project would dispel the charges that the Alliance was concerned only with teachers' salaries and defending teachers against belligerent school boards. Now it could claim it was also concerned with the professional aspect of pedagogy by helping teachers to improve their academic proficiency. On April 2, 1923, the A. G. M. approved the establishing of the bureau and stated its aims:

- 1) To assist members of the A. T. A. to keep in touch with the scientific work in education.
- 2) To assist members of the A. T. A. to improve their professional training.
- 3) To help mould public opinion in educational matters so as to make possible the putting into practice the best educational knowledge.
- 4) To assist teachers of the province in bringing about a greater uniformity in the grading of pupils.¹⁶

In addition, the bureau was to provide correspondence courses, prepare examination papers, distribute stencils for maps and charts and give professional advice to members of the Alliance. Some of the

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A. T. A., Executive Council Minutes, April 2, 1923.

work of preparing materials for teachers was facilitated by enlisting the assistance of the correspondence department and spare-time staff of Alberta College where Barnett had been employed as vice-principal in 1912-13.¹⁷ Arrangements for the operation of the bureau as a division of the A. T. A. Publishing Company, which had previously been set up to publish the A. T. A. Magazine, proved to be extremely complicated. Chalmers explains that "Each stratum had its own bureaucracy. All strata were linked through a common secretary-treasurer or business comptroller; for all three this was John Barnett. If at times he did not appear to know which hat he was wearing, this is not surprising."¹⁸ The upshot of it all was that the confusion led to conflict between Barnett and Newland and the conflict led ultimately to Dr. Newland's dismissal as editor of the A. T. A. Magazine. Barnett became the new Editor-in-Chief in June, 1925, but still the problems of the bureau were not solved. The Executive Council finally decided to liquidate it, but this was easier said than done. The operations of the bureau dragged on unprofitably for two more years under Barnett's management. Many of those concerned were still dissatisfied with the financial operations and some even questioned Barnett's ability to carry this added responsibility. Powell states that, "In 1927 the plight

¹⁷ Barnett Papers.

¹⁸ Chalmers, op. cit., p. 68.

of the Bureau of Education became the ground for open revolt in the A. G. M. There were those who felt that Barnett was not equal to the job and that they should look for another man.¹⁹ Others staunchly stood behind Barnett. Moreover, they did not hesitate to say so. One of the delegates stood up and spoke on Barnett's behalf:

When I was in a dispute with the Boyle Crossing School Board was it a course peddler or a mimeograph foreman or a research student who got me out of a jam? It was not. It was fighting John Barnett, and he is the man we need to head this organization. Mr. Chairman, as a duly appointed delegate of the members-at-large, I wish to move a vote of confidence in our general-secretary, fighting John Barnett.²⁰

Powell tells us that "The motion was seconded and carried handsomely." This anecdote illustrates the fact that Barnett made enemies, but he also made many friends such as C. O. Hicks, A. J. H. Powell, T. E. A. Stanley and Charles Peasley who remained loyal to him in spite of his shortcomings. In the end, both the Executive Council and the A. G. M. supported him although some did not agree wholeheartedly with his ideas. Thus Barnett got his own way but managed to keep the support of those he opposed — a remarkable accomplishment. This ability is described by Hicks:

. . . My admiration for this man reached its peak after watching him emerge from fight after fight only to make over his erstwhile enemies into friends. To me this was John's greatest achievement

¹⁹A. J. H. Powell, "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance" (Unpublished memoir, 1962), p. 22.

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

and it explains in part why he was so valuable an administrator of Alberta Teachers' Association policy.²¹

In July, 1928, the bureau was finally sold to two Calgary teachers and renamed the Western Canadian Institute. Thus the A. T. A. was finally rid of the 'millstone' which had plagued its leaders from its inception.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation

The establishing of a Dominion wide organization for teachers was another step toward professionalism. "One seldom-noted (perhaps because so obvious) hall-mark of a profession is the establishment of a national organization to which all practitioners can belong."²²

Barnett felt that if teaching was to become a profession comparable to that of medicine or law, it would be necessary to have a national teachers' organization comparable to the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Bar Association. He therefore began to press for the inauguration of such an institution. Paton states that, "Barnett and Charlesworth did more than anyone else to launch the C. T. F."²³ Dr. McNally also gives Barnett much of the credit in saying, "He was largely instrumental in the formation of the Canadian Teachers'

²¹C. O. Hicks, In Memory of John Walker Barnett (Printed memorial anthology), p. 2.

²²Chalmers, op. cit., p. 282.

²³J. M. Paton, The Role of Teachers' Organizations in Canadian Society (Quance Lectures, 1962), pp. 37-38.

Federation, the national organization."²⁴ Moreover, the 1919 A. G. M. passed a resolution authorizing Barnett to communicate with the Provincial Teachers' Associations in each of the western provinces on the matter of setting up a Western Federation of Teachers' Alliances "without prejudice however, to a further move in the direction of a Dominion Federation of Teachers' Alliances."²⁵ As a result of these communications, the general secretaries of the four western provincial teachers' organizations held a meeting in Winnipeg in October, 1919. Barnett was appointed secretary, and arrangements were made for a conference to be held the following year in Calgary.²⁶ At the 1920 meeting, representatives from Ontario encouraged the group to set down the constitution so as to permit all teachers' organizations of Canada to join if they should so wish.²⁷

At this inaugural meeting in Calgary, Barnett was named to the Executive Council of the C. T. F. as one of three members for Alberta. The constitution drawn up at this time stated that annual elections for president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer must be held. Miss Helen Arbuthnot was elected as secretary for the following

²⁴G. F. McNally, In Memory of John Walker Barnett, (Printed memorial anthology), p. 23.

²⁵A. T. A., Executive Council minutes, April 19, 1919.

²⁶A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (June, 1920), p. 15.

²⁷Ibid., Vol. II (August, 1921), p. 3.

year thus freeing Barnett for other duties.²⁸ The C. T. F. was, from its earliest stages, concerned with the economic well-being of Canadian teachers but, as Paton notes, it gradually "came to see its proper role as co-ordinating information and promoting co-operation among the provincial affiliates."²⁹ The latter role is exemplified in a motion by Barnett which stated:

that any member in good standing in any affiliated Organization be accepted as a member in good standing in any Province to which he or she may go for the remainder of the fiscal year.³⁰

Another motion by Barnett at this same meeting presented the idea that the Federation should go on record as favoring the establishment of arbitration boards in each of the provinces similar to the Board of Reference which had been set up in Manitoba by the Legislature.³¹

Barnett saw in the C. T. F. an opportunity to involve the Federal Government to a greater extent in educational matters and, at the C. T. F. convention in Toronto in 1921, he moved that "the Dominion Government be asked to give substantial grants to the several provincial governments to assist them in taking care of non-English speaking Canadians."³²

²⁸Canadian Teachers' Federation, Unpublished minutes of Inaugural Meeting, July 27, 1920.

²⁹Paton, op. cit., p. 42.

³⁰C. T. F., Inaugural Meeting minutes, July 27, 1920.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., Unpublished minutes of Annual Meeting, August 9, 1921.

Barnett was also concerned about the financial situation of the Federation. At the second annual convention held in Saskatoon in 1922, a discussion of fees for the ensuing year led to the formation of a sub-committee to draft a tentative budget. This committee consisted of one member from each province, and Barnett was chosen to represent Alberta.³³ The western provinces were dissatisfied because they felt that Ontario was not paying its full share of fees. Differences of opinion stemmed from a lack of consensus between East and West regarding the function of the national body. Barnett had been especially disappointed with the meagre contribution of the C. T. F. to the Edmonton High School teachers strike fund, but the Ontario delegates maintained that the Federation should be concerned with education in general rather than teacher welfare in particular.

Continued bickering over finances and fees resulted in the establishment of a Constitution and Policy Committee in 1924.³⁴ Barnett was appointed to this committee and he immediately attempted to reform the fiscal policy of the Federation. At the Annual Meeting in Victoria that year he presented the following resolution:

. . . that the Financial year of the C. T. F. be from July 1 to June 30 and that the different affiliated organizations be assessed the per capita fee as provided for in the Constitution on each and

³³Ibid., July 25, 1922.

³⁴Ibid., August 13, 1924.

every member paying the fixed annual dues to his own Provincial Organization during the above mentioned year.³⁵

Barnett also stated at this time that he believed the membership fee for the C.T.F. should be 50 cents per member for the first 1500 members and 25 cents per member for the next 1000 members and that the maximum fee for any affiliated organization should be \$1000.³⁶ He put these ideas into resolutions which the delegates adopted, but still disagreements over finances continued to plague the national group. Barnett continued to sit on the policy committee and, as chairman of the group, presented the annual report in both 1926 and 1927. At the Eighth Annual Convention in Toronto, Barnett recommended:

- 1) That the C.T.F. approve of the establishment of faculties of education in certain Canadian Universities and expresses the hope that in the near future at least one University in each Province will have such a faculty in its organization.
- 2) That the C.T.F. approve of the action of certain Departments of Education in adopting a policy of making grants on a sliding scale so that advantage may be given to those local authorities which pay a more generous salary to their teachers.
- 3) That the C.T.F. views with satisfaction the tendency throughout Canada to increase the term of teachers' training and reaffirms our belief in the necessity for higher standards of entrance to training schools and a longer period of professional training.³⁷

Thus Barnett hoped to get the Federation to back the things he was

³⁵Ibid., August 14, 1924.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., August 15, 1927.

pressing for in Alberta.

By 1927, the C. T. F. included the teachers' organizations from all provinces of Canada and it had gained considerable prestige. That year was of special significance to the Federation as it played host to the World Federation of Educational Associations in Toronto. Delegates attended from all over the world and Barnett was chosen to represent the Alliance.³⁸ At the 1930 C. T. F. annual convention held at Jasper, Alberta, John Barnett was named president. An A. T. A. past president's account of the convention states that Barnett, "an Albertan of high educational repute and executive ability has been chosen as head of the Federation. It is an honor well-merited by our general secretary and bespeaks the very high respect in which his person and judgment are held by the members of our sister organizations."³⁹ In 1934 Barnett was appointed by the C. T. F. to be a member of a committee in charge of setting up a Bureau of Research.⁴⁰

That Barnett played his full part in the development of the national organization is abundantly clear in spite of the fact that he did not always agree with C. T. F. policies. Although "Barnett was a

³⁸Ibid., August 16, 1927.

³⁹A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XI (September, 1930), p. 9.

⁴⁰K. McNab, "A History of the Alberta Teachers' Association," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1949, p. 138.

founding member and for 25 years a dominant figure in the Canadian Teachers' Federation,⁴¹ he could not control the larger organization as he did the Alliance. But, he continued to give it his whole-hearted support, and his work in the Federation exemplifies his broader view of the importance of a national organization in the professional development of teachers.

Tenure

If John Barnett were to be credited with only one thing, it could well be his insistence on fair-play. As membership in the Alliance grew, he became increasingly more confident and aggressive, more resentful of injustices and more popular with the down-trodden, overburdened, often distressed rural teachers. This popularity stemmed from the success Barnett had in supporting the teachers in unjust dismissal cases. In the early days security of tenure was almost unheard of. Teachers lived in constant fear of being dismissed on the flimsiest of excuses and many appealed to the Alliance for help. In 1924 Barnett reported that the A. T. A. had threatened to take legal action in as many as 76 cases and had hired a solicitor, G. H. Van Allen, to carry out the threats. However, many cases were settled out of court and of the 76 mentioned above, only three actually went to court.⁴² In

⁴¹Powell, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴²J. W. Barnett, "Report to the Annual General Meeting," A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. IV (May, 1924), p. 30.

1926 Van Allen reported that the prestige of the Alliance had been greatly augmented, that the Alliance was now a power to be reckoned with, that some changes had been made in The School Act and that precedents were being set in settling disputes between boards and teachers.⁴³ Some cases were taken as far as the Supreme Court of Canada, but others were settled in magistrate's courts by Barnett himself who "often did minor court jobs to keep legal costs down."⁴⁴ Still other disputes never got any farther than the school board offices, the school playground or a farmer's stockyard. Numerous examples of such are recounted in the memoirs of past presidents. One tenure dispute involving the impending dismissal of a young Smoky Lake principal is an example of the chicanery to which some boards stooped. However, after a meeting with Barnett acting as the teacher's advocate, the board withdrew the dismissal charges. The reason became apparent "a few months later, when the young principal was elected M. L. A. for the riding. Someone else had had political aspirations, and it had seemed a good idea to get the young principal out of the way."⁴⁵

In his attempts to ensure that teachers were not unjustly

⁴³G. H. Van Allen, A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. VI (May, 1926), p. 36.

⁴⁴Powell, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 19.

treated, Barnett encountered many obstacles. However, the opposition from the attorney-general's department and from the Department of Education was particularly galling. A past president of the Association relates that "It is interesting to recall that for some years the Minister of Education refused to admit John Barnett to his office."⁴⁶ This bitter antagonism of the government officials towards the Alliance did not make Barnett's job any easier. Although the Alliance was successful in many of its legal disputes, it did not win them all. It suffered total defeat in the Blairmore case in spite of the efforts of Barnett and solicitor Van Allen. Other cases which were equally frustrating were the Redcliff, Ponoka, Lethbridge and Youngstown disputes. These school boards were all charged with the obnoxious tactics of calling for resignations without just cause,⁴⁷ and giving teachers no chance to defend themselves. After unsuccessful attempts to have teachers reinstated, Barnett's only recourse was to place these boards on the blacklist.⁴⁸ But, at the same time, he strove constantly to have the tenure clause of The School Act changed.

In 1921, when the new Minister of Education, Perren Baker, took over, Barnett presented to the government a proposed new tenure

⁴⁶ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XXXVII (February, 1957), p. 27.

⁴⁷ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (Sept. - Oct., 1920), p. 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

clause calling for continuous contracts, more than five days notice on dismissal hearings, the establishment of a conciliation board and the right of a teacher to have legal representation at dismissal hearings.⁴⁹ However, Baker was not much more sympathetic than G. Peter Smith had been, and little was done during the next fifteen years to relieve the situation. Dedicated as Barnett was to helping the teachers, his cause was hampered by unfair legislation which he seemed impotent to remedy, and school boards continued to harass teachers in a high-handed manner until the defeat of the U. F. A. government. With the election of the Social Credit party, conditions were greatly improved. "The new government moved vigorously into the field of educational legislation."⁵⁰ Laws regarding security of tenure, pensions and collective bargaining were soon passed, but the most important measures were the amendments to The Teaching Profession Act.⁵¹

School boards were not the only ones the Alliance put on its blacklists. Barnett did not hesitate to censure those teachers who were found guilty of transgressions also. One such case involved two teachers whose actions were deemed unprofessional in that they had assisted a school board in unfair actions against another teacher. The Executive Council decided, no doubt at Barnett's insistence, to punish

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁰Chalmers, op. cit., p. 129.

⁵¹Ibid.

the teachers by keeping their names on record in the office.⁵² Thus, in the name of professionalism, Barnett prided himself as an arbitrator of justice to all. With the passing of The Teaching Profession Act the Association gained the authority to discipline its members in order to ensure more professional behavior.

Pensions

The privileges enjoyed by retired teachers today were planned for fifty years ago by John Barnett and his colleagues. Pensions were part of the original plan outlined by Barnett in his Magna Carta when the Alliance was formed.⁵³ He believed that teachers could not have complete financial security without a pension scheme and that it was necessary for professionalism.

The 1918 Easter convention of the A. E. A. and A. T. A. passed a resolution giving the newly formed teachers' Alliance authority to investigate the pension question. A Committee was struck to prepare proposals which were presented to the Minister of Education in 1919. G. P. Smith pleaded for time to get oriented to his new position, but did promise to give the proposal his consideration.⁵⁴ This was the

⁵²A. T. A., Executive Council minutes, January, 1925.

⁵³Supra, p. 1.

⁵⁴A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. X (April, 1930), p. 13.

beginning of the Ministers' procrastination in the matter of a superannuation scheme for teachers. Year after year, Barnett went back to the government with one proposal after another. His 1921 Manifesto included a statement regarding pensions.⁵⁵ Between 1920 and 1934 Barnett continued to press for a pension scheme and in a survey of its endeavors in this area, the A.T.A. stated in February, 1935, that it had dealt with this matter fifty-four times.⁵⁶ Year after year the government gave one excuse or another. Finally in 1929, after British Columbia and Saskatchewan had acquired Retirement Acts, it seemed as if Alberta was going to be successful, but the Wall Street crash intervened. The government's reaction was predictable:

It was not until the summer of 1929 that Premier Brownlee, conscious of the conspicuous isolation of Alberta in the matter, took John Barnett aside. He asked John to keep his pension people quiet for a few months, so the government would not seem to be under pressure. If this were done, he believed he could carry through a teachers' retirement plan at the next (1930) session of the House The crash on Wall Street came in October, 1929; the fiscal conditions of the province immediately became precarious, and in the depression which followed nothing was heard of teachers' pensions. For a few destitute old teachers, Perren Baker was able to secure an indigent allowance of \$25 or \$30 a month; that was all.⁵⁷

However, Barnett did not give up. His next attempt came in

⁵⁵Ibid., Vol. II (October, 1921), p. 7.

⁵⁶Ibid., Vol. XV (February, 1935), p. 2.

⁵⁷Powell, op. cit., p. 21.

1933 when he drew up a plan in which:

- 1) Only teachers with highest salaries would contribute.
- 2) The government would pay administration costs only for the first three years.
- 3) Profits of approximately \$50,000 would be available to the government as a loan.⁵⁸

Even this generous offer was turned down by the desperate, scandal-riven U.F.A. government. Prospects looked bright in 1935, when the new school-teacher premier took over but it was not until 1939 that Aberhart called Barnett to his office and offered the first government pension plan to the teachers — \$25 per month upon retirement at age 65.⁵⁹ Barnett had hoped for more, but lost no time in inaugurating the scheme. A committee consisting of Barnett, two teachers and a government representative was formed to invest the teachers' contributions. Eight teachers began to collect pensions on December 31, 1939, after having contributed to the fund for only four months.⁶⁰

Thus Barnett had finally achieved a pension scheme of sorts. Although it left much to be desired in many areas, still another of the professional goals had been accomplished and Barnett must have felt

⁵⁸ A.T.A. Magazine, Vol. XIII (March, 1933), p. 9.

⁵⁹ C.O. Hicks, "Reminiscences," (Unpublished memoir, February, 1967), p. 13.

⁶⁰ A.T.A. Magazine, Vol. XX (March, 1940), p. 28.

considerable satisfaction after twenty years of persistent pressures on legislators. Kratzmann's comment is noteworthy:

While Alberta was responsible for, or shared in many firsts in education . . . it was the last geographical unit of the English-speaking British Empire to achieve a state-supported pension fund for teachers.⁶¹

Salaries

Barnett believed that teachers would not become professional until the principle of collective bargaining was accepted. He was positively opposed to individual teachers attempting to secure raises by personal solicitation as he felt this method was degrading and unprofessional. He stated that "This bargaining and dickering over salaries is undignified and teachers must do their best to discourage — make impossible — its continuance."⁶² Thus, he tried to persuade school boards to adopt the Model Salary Schedule which he had drawn up.

Referring to the salary question in 1920, Barnett said the A. T. A. must show determination in the face of opposition.⁶³ He was convinced that properly paid teachers would be professional teachers.

⁶¹A. Kratzmann, "The Alberta Teachers' Association: A Documentary Analysis of a Professional Organization," Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1963, p. 186.

⁶²A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (August, 1920), p. 1.

⁶³Ibid., Vol. I (June, 1920), p. 23.

Therefore another of his arguments for higher salaries was that "Teaching must be made a career, its dignity as a profession must be restored and the only way in which this can be done is by making the financial emoluments at least comparable with those of other lines of work."⁶⁴ Barnett was not only concerned about the teachers but also about the pupils. He stated that "The squeezing of a few dollars on the teacher's salary is . . . deleterious to the welfare of Canada's future citizens."⁶⁵ He constantly urged teachers to join the Alliance and implied that increased memberships would put the A. T. A. in a stronger position to demand salaries "commensurate with the office and dignity of a teacher. A big increase in membership will do much to stem the tide of reaction which has set in against teachers' salaries."⁶⁶

The reaction to which Barnett referred had begun during the depression after the war and reached a climax in the Edmonton High School Teachers' strike which took place in 1921. The Morning Bulletin carried a detailed account of the strike which began on April 11, 1921, and ended exactly two weeks later on April 25. The teachers tried to explain their position in letters to The Bulletin while the stand

⁶⁴Ibid., Vol. I (August, 1920), p. 19.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 1.

⁶⁶Ibid., Vol. II (March, 1922), p. 1.

taken by the school board seemed to be upheld by the editor in his editorial columns. The first letter from the teachers' representative stated that "the one insurmountable barrier in our relations with the board was the insulting attitude of the chairman towards the representative of the teachers."⁶⁷ Two days later another letter from the teachers claimed that "the Edmonton teachers are on strike because the school board flatly refuses to recognize the Alliance. The teachers claim the right of collective bargaining; that right has been autocratically rejected by the school board. The teachers are out on strike because of the attitude of the board in ejecting their representative from the council of the board."⁶⁸ Personalities had definitely entered into the struggle and it almost seemed as if the question of salaries had become secondary despite the fact that Barnett listed the negotiation of the 1921 salary schedule as one of the four issues, the other three being recognition of the Alliance, collective bargaining and teacher representation at school board meetings.⁶⁹

A public meeting was held in McDougall Church one week after the strike began, to try to come to some decision as to what

⁶⁷The Morning Bulletin, April 11, 1921, p. 7.

⁶⁸Ibid., April 14, 1921, p. 9.

⁶⁹A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (April - May, 1921), p. 3.

should be done.⁷⁰ Both sides ably stated their case and the meeting ended with the passing of a resolution asking the board and the teachers to get together. This they did, but after sitting for four and a half hours on the evening of Wednesday, April 20, they failed to arrive at any decision.⁷¹ The following day the board capitulated to a degree by offering to appoint a committee to meet the teachers and discuss salaries if they would return to work. The board's resolution was:

That the Edmonton Board of Public School Trustees expresses its willingness to appoint a standing conference committee consisting of two of its members, for the purpose of conferring with representatives of the teachers or employees in other branches of the service of the board, the said committee to report back to the board as a whole, the proceedings of any such conference.⁷²

Barnett found this totally unacceptable since it deliberately ignored the Alliance. But the teachers said they would accept the resolution with the following amendments:

- 1) That the words the "Edmonton High School Teachers' Alliance" replace the words "the teachers."
- 2) That in the event of any report from the conference committee being referred back to the whole board or any committee of the board, the representatives of the Alliance shall have the privilege of being present at such committee or at the board on the same footing as before the conference committee.
- 3) That the representatives of the Alliance be invited to attend the management committee meetings.⁷³

⁷⁰The Morning Bulletin, April 18, 1921, p. 1.

⁷¹Ibid., April 21, 1921, p. 1.

⁷²Ibid., April 22, 1921, p. 1.

⁷³Ibid., April 25, 1921, p. 1.

The board, of course, did not want to include the word "Alliance" in any part of the resolution, but a compromise was finally agreed upon as follows:

- 1) "Representatives of the High School Alliance, Public School Alliance or any other group of teachers or any individual teacher" replace the words "the teachers."
- 2) That in the event of any report from the conference committee to the whole board or any committee of the board the representatives of the teachers (as defined by groups under point 1) shall exercise their existing privilege of being present at such committee or at the board to present their views.⁷⁴

The third amendment was opposed by one board member, but it was pointed out that since these meetings were open to the public and the press, there should be no objection to Alliance representatives coming and listening to the discussion. The board finally agreed that no action be taken in regard to this request. Thus the points of contention were resolved and the teachers went back to work.

As is the case in many controversies, both sides declared they had won. There is no doubt that the teachers did win some of their demands, in that the salaries question was to be considered, "but it was also understood that this would signify minor adjustments."⁷⁵ Also, some recognition for the Alliance had been achieved, although the power of the Alliance had been emasculated somewhat by the

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 1.

rewording of the first amendment. Writing in the A. T. A. Magazine after the strike, Barnett declared that the teachers had won a measure of recognition for the Alliance and partial representation. According to Barnett, it was agreed "that Alliance representatives should be present at all meetings of the Board or any committee thereof having under consideration any report from the Conference Committee and that the Alliance representatives should have the further privilege of laying their case before the Board or committee of the board."⁷⁶

In 1964, some 22 years after the strike, a Special Issue of the A. T. A. Magazine contained submissions of the Association to a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly, on Collective Bargaining. Referring to the 1921 strike, it stated that "the Edmonton school board recognized the Alliance as bargaining agent for the teachers."⁷⁷ On May 6, a Conference Committee consisting of two trustees was set up by the school board and thus the principle of collective bargaining was established.⁷⁸

Twenty-one years elapsed before the next strike of teachers took place in Alberta. On November 10, 1942, the teachers of the Vegreville School Division walked out closing fifty-seven of the sixty-

⁷⁶ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (April - May, 1921), p. 3.

⁷⁷ A. T. A. Magazine, Special Issue, Vol. XLV (October, 1964), p. 106.

⁷⁸ The Morning Bulletin, May 6, 1921, p. 1.

two schools in the Division.⁷⁹ The cause of the strike was salaries, over which the dispute had been raging since March.⁸⁰ The Vegreville divisional board had agreed to calling in a Board of Arbitration but had refused to abide by its decision. The Edmonton Bulletin of October 2 carried this announcement:

Notification has been received by J. W. Barnett secretary-manager of the A. T. A. to the effect that the Vegreville divisional board has not accepted the rulings of the Board of Arbitration with respect to the amount of salary teachers of the division are to be paid.⁸¹

The board had announced that it would pay salaries based on a basic minimum of \$840 after the Arbitration Board recommended that the basic should be \$925. Barnett's comment on the decision of the board was, "Their action was in direct contravention of previous understandings effected between the board and the A. T. A."⁸² Barnett further stated that "of all the disputes in trades and industries that have been settled by boards of arbitration in the province, their rulings have been ignored only by school boards."⁸³

Many people were disappointed when the annual A. S. T. A. con-

⁷⁹The Edmonton Bulletin, November 10, 1942, p. 9.

⁸⁰Ibid., October 20, 1942, p. 9.

⁸¹Ibid., October 2, 1942, p. 10. The reference to Barnett as secretary-manager of the A. T. A. is another indication of the extent to which his power had grown.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

vention being held in Edmonton on November 11, 12 and 13 did not find a solution to the problem. Some trustees sought a method of forcing the teachers to return to their schools. But Dr. McNally, speaking at the convention urged the trustees to settle amicably and speedily. He said that the teachers could not be ordered back to work under the War Measures Act. Moreover, he added that there was a great shortage of teachers and that there was danger that the Vegreville board would lose the teachers they had.⁸⁴ Barnett announced at this stage that the A. T. A. had been informed that the Dominion Industrial Disputes Act did not apply to teachers and he declared "that no obstacles would be placed in the way of teachers desiring to transfer to other teaching posts, but that it might be necessary to obtain permits to transfer to another vocation."⁸⁵ Thus, Barnett and McNally had both tried to pressure the Vegreville board into a settlement. The A. S. T. A. convention ended with the appointment of a committee of three trustees to meet with Department of Education officials in an attempt to bring about a settlement.⁸⁶ Dr. McNally was named as an intermediary on behalf of the Department and announced that he would have a proposal

⁸⁴Ibid., November 12, 1942, p. 5.

⁸⁵Ibid., November 16, 1942, p. 9.

⁸⁶Ibid., November 18, 1942, p. 16.

ready to submit to the teachers in a few days.⁸⁷

On December 9, 1942, Dr. McNally presented his proposal which was accepted by the Provincial Executive and the Vegreville local of the A. T. A. but rejected by the school board, thus stalemating the negotiations.⁸⁸ On the same day Dr. McNally announced that "the Department would take action to open the Vegreville schools on January 4, next,"⁸⁹ if the board had not made a move by then. The next announcement came five days later, to the effect that the trustees had met with Premier Aberhart.⁹⁰ The results of the interview were not announced, but another proposal by the board was rejected by the teachers on December 23.⁹¹ On the same date, however, a further alternative was proposed by the department for the teachers' consideration. In the December 30 issue of The Bulletin, a news item announced that a settlement had been reached on December 29. Schools would open on January 4, since the trustees had finally agreed that the teachers "be paid a cost-of-living bonus of $7\frac{1}{2}\%$."⁹²

⁸⁷
Ibid.

⁸⁸
Ibid., December 14, 1942, p. 9.

⁸⁹
Ibid.

⁹⁰
Ibid., December 19, 1942, p. 11.

⁹¹
Ibid., December 23, 1942, p. 16.

⁹²
Ibid., December 30, 1942, p. 9.

Thus the longest strike in the history of the teaching profession in Alberta came to an end after thirty-three teaching days. In the final settlement no statement of basic salary was given, but the board agreed to pay a total of \$69,830 plus the $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ for the 62 teachers less the amount of salary lost while on strike. Originally, the arbitration board had recommended a total settlement of \$76,000.⁹³ Thus, the cost to the board was almost as much as had been suggested by arbitration, but the payment of the bonus was preferable to raising the basic salary.

In writing about the Vegreville strike, Hall states that, "The strike may have served as a test case to test the support of the Association and the application of the labour legislation."⁹⁴ With regard to Hall's first contention, support given by A.T.A. members was gratifying. Each member was asked for a voluntary contribution of \$1.00 per month for the duration of the strike, thus ensuring that the striking teachers would have an income.⁹⁵ Hall's second point may be valid since this legislation had applied to teachers only since 1941.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴L. G. Hall, "A Historical Study of Salary Payments to Teachers and of the Emergence of Principles of Salary Scheduling in Alberta," Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1967, p. 151.

⁹⁵A.T.A., Executive Council minutes, October 10, 1942.

The A. T. A. Magazine states, "Finally in 1941, as a result of representations to the government, teachers were included in the provisions of The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act."⁹⁶ Perhaps Barnett did wish to test the new legislation and the support of the members. If so, he must have been satisfied with the results. As stated above, negotiations went through all the steps to arbitration and the power of the Association was demonstrated when the teachers returned to work with most of their demands fulfilled.

Summary

By the time Barnett retired in 1946, most of the goals listed in his Magna Carta had been achieved, either as a result of his efforts or by the auspicious circumstances created by the election of the Social Credit government. Barnett's goal of professionalism for teachers was partially accomplished by the setting up of such tangible projects as the A. T. A. Magazine. One of the chief values of this publication is that it has provided an unbroken record of the history of the Association.

Barnett's work in assisting in the establishment of the Canadian Teachers' Federation has served to keep the Alberta Teachers' Association in touch with educational developments in other provinces.

⁹⁶A. T. A. Magazine, Special Issue, Vol. XLV (October, 1964), p. 11.

Although Barnett was not always thoroughly in agreement with some of its policies, the C. T. F. had supplied the A. T. A. with some financial backing as well as moral support during the first teachers' strike in 1921.⁹⁷ The work of the general secretary in securing formal contracts ensuring security of tenure, has added to the dignity and well-being of individual teachers, while his success in establishing salary schedules, collective bargaining and respectable pensions has improved the economic position of all Alberta teachers. Writing in the first issue of the A. T. A. Magazine, Barnett stated, "The guiding principle of our policy will therefore be . . . to persistently endeavor to raise the status of the teaching profession in the Province."⁹⁸ One cannot deny that his work has contributed immeasurably to the fulfillment of this aim.

⁹⁷ Gerald Nason, "The Canadian Teachers' Federation: A Study of Its Historical Development, Interests and Activities From 1919 to 1960," Unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1964, p. 33.

⁹⁸ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (June, 1920), p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

PERSONAL VIEWS OF JOHN WALKER BARNETT

Any assessment of Barnett's personal views must take into account the fact that the man had spent nearly half his life in England before he immigrated to Canada. Hicks explains that "John was too mature when he left Lincolnshire to melt into the common mould. His mannerisms and speech would always be those of his native land even though his heart was possessed by Alberta."¹ Thus, his English background surely influenced his views and contributed to his attitude towards society.

I GENERAL VIEWS

On Social Reform

John Barnett believed that the children of any nation are its most important asset and that any effort at social reform must be directed to greater care and training of the child. He stated that "no society is properly organized until every child that is born into it shall have an opportunity in life."² In order to provide this opportunity,

¹C. O. Hicks, "Reminiscences" (Unpublished memoir, February, 1967), p. 15.

²A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (August, 1920), p. 18.

Barnett was convinced that "the first point of attack is the improvement in the financial status of the teachers."³ Consequently, he worked persistently to strengthen the Alberta Teachers' Alliance with the hope that it would be an instrument to improve society.

On Civic Rights

That society as a whole regarded teachers almost as second class citizens was a fact which Barnett struggled to change. In the early years, the public generally opposed the participation of teachers in political activity of any kind. In this field of civic rights for teachers, as in most phases of A. T. A. development, Barnett made his influence felt. Chalmers notes:

As early as the 1920's the general secretary was largely responsible for beating off an Edmonton based attempt to deprive teachers of the right to serve as aldermen.⁴

An article in the A. T. A. Magazine by Barnett states that in 1921 the Edmonton teachers were being criticized by the press for inviting "School Board candidates to attend a joint meeting of the two Local Alliances to express their views on certain fundamental Alliance policies."⁵ It was Barnett's candid opinion that the teachers

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province (Toronto: University Press, 1968), p. 168.

⁵ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (January, 1921), p. 13.

should be allowed to exercise their franchise collectively, and that by organizing and systematically informing all members of the group, they were merely being more efficient. Barnett summarized his thoughts thus:

Only the lack of organization and of loyalty to their organization; only the futility of cross purposes and the ignorance of inexperience; only the lack of mental alertness and the misunderstanding of both politics and economics prevents teachers from attaining a higher status and from exerting in the community that power which is rightfully theirs.⁶

However, when Aberhart, an ex-teacher became premier of Alberta and chose several teachers as his cabinet ministers, the right of teachers to participate in politics was irrevocably established.

On Politics

Barnett had been a left wing Liberal in England,⁷ but in this country his interest in politics was not paramount. He believed that members of the A. T. A. should be 'firstly, citizens; secondly, educationists; thirdly, teachers and wage-earners; fourthly (maybe), adherents to political parties.'⁸ Although Canadian politics (system and party names) were borrowed from Great Britain, the Canadian parties do not resemble the British parties in either composition or

⁶
Ibid.

⁷ Statement by Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, May 6, 1969.

⁸ A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. X (May, 1930), p. 16.

principle.⁹ Therefore Barnett found difficulty in aligning himself with any particular party in Alberta. However, it is true that he was "anything but a Conservative."¹⁰

Barnett voted for the man rather than the party if he deemed this to be expedient. In the 1921 Provincial election, he campaigned against the Liberal Minister of Education, The Hon. George Peter Smith because the Minister had been "so forthright in derision of the A. T. A."¹¹

In a 1930 editorial in the A. T. A. Magazine, Barnett stated that it was his firm conviction that:

. . . the question of educational reform, involving as it inevitably does the future of the boys and girls of Alberta, should be today the paramount consideration of every citizen, especially those who aspire to membership in the Provincial Legislature.¹²

Barnett's own political decisions were motivated by a consideration of what was best for the Alliance and for education. Thus, he suggested:

. . . that teachers, before casting their lot with any party -- political group, should seek ways and means of arriving at a reliable, impartial conviction with respect to how each individual

⁹Dean E. McHenry, The Third Force in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 1.

¹⁰Mrs. Barnett, loc. cit.

¹¹A. J. H. Powell, "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance" (Unpublished memoir, 1962), p. 8.

¹²A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. X (May, 1930), p. 17.

candidate for election to the Provincial Legislature 'stacks up' as far as education and our platform is concerned.¹³

II VIEWS ON EDUCATION

On Financing Education

Barnett sincerely believed that if improvements in society were to take place more money must be made available for education. In England, he had become accustomed to an educational system in which the State at the national level accepted its full share of the responsibility for education. Therefore, it was difficult for him to get used to the idea that the Canadian government contributed nothing directly to the financing of public schools. Accordingly, he began a crusade for Federal aid for education in Canada. Barnett's concern in this matter is evident from the number of times he voiced his opinion on it.

One of the first issues of the A. T. A. Magazine contained an article on educational financing in England which stated that "One half the cost of the education of any locality is born by the State."¹⁴ If it was possible for England to do this, Barnett thought Canada should be able to also. Over the years, he continued to press for Federal aid, this being one of the problems which the Alliance presented annually

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (August, 1920), p. 18.

to the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

In 1938 Barnett and a committee of eleven other Association workers prepared a brief on educational finance to present to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. This brief reiterated his earlier pronouncements on the problem, namely:

Our present system of raising about 83% of our funds for elementary and secondary education by direct tax on real property in local communities, about 17% by the provinces . . . and none at all by Canada as a whole is proving increasingly inadequate as time goes by.¹⁵

Four reasons why Canada should give national support to general education were also included. Barnett believed that Federal support must be given with a minimum of administrative control and that the details should be set down plainly by law. Control must not be far removed from the people, he contended, since they are so vitally concerned with the welfare of their children.¹⁶

In March, 1940, another article on Federal aid appeared in the A. T. A. Magazine, stating that it could be accomplished in three simple steps with an increase of less than 3% in Dominion spending. At this time Barnett declared, "If it is to take ten years to win Federal Aid for education, then let us kindle our courage and make this year count."¹⁷ The following month an editorial by Barnett entitled

¹⁵A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XVIII (April, 1938), p. 17.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁷Ibid., Vol. XX (March, 1940), p. 27.

"Federal Aid Is Inevitable" stated that:

. . . sooner or later the public of Canada will see to it that purely technical objections allegedly based on The British North America Act . . . shall not stand in the way of justice towards young citizens of Canada.¹⁸

Barnett believed that the onus was on teachers to promote this cause and he admonished them "to lay hold of this problem and hang on until something gives way."¹⁹

Speaking at the Canadian Teachers' Federation convention banquet in Moncton in 1931 Barnett queried, "After food and shelter should not education be the next charge upon the head of the home, the city and state?"²⁰ His speech continued with the plea that education be "more closely related to life" and concluded with the deplorable fact that Canadians were spending more on soft drinks than on all educational institutions including the Universities.²¹

Although Barnett worked persistently to secure the assistance of the Federal government in this matter, he did not live to see its fulfillment and at the time of his retirement, in an interview with the press, he repeated, "There is no hope for education until it is taken

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. XX (April, 1940), p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Edmonton Journal, July 31, 1931, p. 7.

²¹Ibid.

out of the field of direct taxation."²²

On Large Divisions

Barnett was strongly in favor of the large school units and by his own statement had "devoted years of concentration to Large Divisions."²³ He saw in them the opportunity to get rid of the small local school boards and spent much time drawing up plans for their inauguration. From 1922 on, the Alliance was pressing for legislation which would allow the establishment of large units.

Barnett stated the policy of the Alliance on this subject many times and in the fall of 1926, he began a strenuous campaign to indoctrinate teachers and the public. A statement of the benefits to be derived from the conversion appeared in both the September and October A.T.A. Magazines. The November issue also contained an article entitled "The Larger Administrative Unit."²⁴ The following fall another article appeared on the same topic,²⁵ and in December, 1927, the Executive Council of the Alliance passed a resolution endorsing the idea of Municipal School Boards.²⁶

²²Edmonton Bulletin, September 4, 1946, p. 9.

²³A.T.A. Magazine, Vol. XVIII (March, 1938), p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., Vol. XII (November, 1926), p. 1.

²⁵Ibid., Vol. XIII (November, 1927), p. 1.

²⁶Alberta Teachers' Alliance, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, December 29, 1927.

In May, 1930, Barnett again published his thoughts on large school divisions. At this time, he stated that he favored "the creation of larger units of administration to the extent that the unit shall be sufficiently large to enable it to function with dignity and efficiency, yet without denial of or encroaching upon the principle of local autonomy."²⁷ A year later, the same idea was stated again with some slight modifications which included changing The School Act to provide for large divisions, hiring Superintendents rather than Inspectors and freeing teachers from the direct control of small local boards.²⁸ This last point was the dominant factor which motivated Barnett to press for large units since the small rural boards had caused him so much trouble over salaries and tenure. However, it was not until the Social Credit government took over that the large unit concept became law.²⁹

On Curriculum

The idea that teachers should have a voice in determining what is to go on in the classroom was consistently propounded by Barnett since this was a matter which affected education at all levels.

²⁷A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. X (May, 1930), p. 9.

²⁸Ibid., Vol. XI (January, 1931), p. 19.

²⁹Isidore Goresky, "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta School System," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1944, p. 152.

In Alberta, the practice of appointing Normal School Instructors and School Inspectors to curriculum committees was particularly frustrating to the general secretary who had taught in England where courses of studies are set up at the local level or even by the individual teachers concerned.³⁰ Barnett therefore worked diligently to get teachers placed on curriculum committees as representatives of the Alliance.

Barnett's Manifesto of 1921 contained a request for permission for the Alliance to have a hand in the revision of the high school curriculum which was then taking place.³¹ Two months later, in December, 1921, the Minister of Education invited a representative of the Alliance to attend sessions of the Elementary Revision Committee and present the Alliance's point of view.³² Barnett prepared a questionnaire and sent it out to all teachers concerned in order to stimulate discussion and to help organize the various views of the teachers regarding curriculum changes. These he compiled and presented his findings to the Minister. Shortly thereafter, the Department of Education released a prepared revision of the curriculum for

³⁰A. V. Judges (ed.), Pioneers of English Education (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1952), p. 61.

³¹A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. II (October, 1921), p. 7.

³²Ibid., Vol. II (December, 1921), p. 23.

elementary schools for consideration by the teachers.³³ Barnett encouraged teachers to meet and discuss the report and asked them to send him their reactions so he could act as a co-ordinator and compile a composite report. His plea was based, as usual, on professionalism:

The primary obligation which rests upon the teaching profession is to take an interest in matters which ultimately concern the "spade work" of the school and the interests of the pupils. This may involve, at times, the making of some sacrifice to meet and exchange views on educational questions, and also the taking advantage, whenever possible, of every facility for speaking as a professional group on such matters.³⁴

It is not an exaggeration to say that, at least in part as a result of Barnett's efforts, Alberta has been a leader in this area of curriculum development. Even as late as 1962, when Paton delivered the Quance Lectures, only Alberta and Saskatchewan Teachers' Organizations had the right to name representatives to provincial curriculum committees.³⁵

On Teacher Training

John Barnett believed that the quality of education was dependent upon the standard of teachers' qualifications and he pressed continuously to raise the standard of the teaching force. From the

³³Ibid., Vol. II (March, 1922), p. 3.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵J. M. Paton, The Role of Teachers' Organizations in Canadian Society (Quance Lectures, 1962), p. 60.

earliest days of the Alliance's history he insisted that permit holders be excluded from membership in the Alliance.³⁶ As early as 1924, the Alliance was pressing for a Faculty of Education to be established at the University of Alberta for the purpose of training teachers. On April 19, 1924, the A. G. M. passed a resolution urging the government to establish such a faculty and appointed a committee to carry this resolution into effect. Three years later, the general secretary wrote to the Minister of Education advocating that a six-year combined arts and education program be set up.³⁷ In 1928 the University Senate announced plans for the training of high school teachers and one year later in 1929, the first class was enrolled in the School of Education.

During the next ten years, the A. T. A. continued to agitate for a Faculty of Education. In June, 1938, an A. T. A. Magazine editorial by Barnett entitled "Why No Faculty" stirred up a controversy over the matter.³⁸ Six months later another editorial entitled "A Faculty of Education Needed," criticized the School of Education arrangement as being inadequate.³⁹ Finally in 1939, "the school was given the status

³⁶A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (September - October, 1920), p. 15.

³⁷Alberta Teachers' Alliance, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, December 27, 1927.

³⁸A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XVIII (June, 1938), p. 2.

³⁹Ibid., Vol. XIX (January, 1939), p. 2.

of College of Education."⁴⁰

In 1941 Barnett was appointed to a University Survey Committee set up by the Provincial Government 'to examine the operation of the University as a whole.'⁴¹ H. C. Newland, with whom Barnett had been involved in many educational endeavors, was also named as a member. The committee met many times during the summer and fall of that year and one of its recommendations was 'that the College of Education be given the status of a faculty.'⁴² This recommendation was put into practice in 1942 but it was not until 1945 that all teacher education became the responsibility of the University.⁴³

That Barnett favored university training for teachers is attested to by the fact that a Faculty of Education was one of the aims of the Alliance listed in his Magna Carta. Indeed, one of his reasons for coming to Canada was so his own children could get a university education.⁴⁴ Moreover, he made much of the fact that teachers should

⁴⁰John Macdonald, A History of the University of Alberta 1908 - 1958 (Toronto: W. J. Gage Ltd., 1958), p. 37.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 48.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of their Development, 1905-1945," Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1961, p. 282.

⁴⁴Mrs. Barnett, personal interview, November 4, 1968. All four of the Barnett children earned degrees at the University of Alberta. The three daughters became teachers and the son was a medical doctor.

be educated like other professional groups such as lawyers, doctors and dentists. Referring to correspondence course supervisors who were placed in Alberta schools to alleviate the teacher shortage during World War II, Barnett stated:

We were flabbergasted to learn that School Boards were now employing non-teachers, pupils just graduated from Grade XI or Grade XII, to 'supervise' pupils in teacherless schools working on correspondence courses of the Department of Education We wonder just what would happen in regard to Medicine, Dentistry, Law etc., if because of the shortage of licensed persons, those unlicensed and unqualified were permitted to practise.⁴⁵

However, in his later years, he seems to have done some hedging in regard to this question. A statement from Powell's memoir sheds some light on the subject:

John never held an academic degree, and was not unconscious of the fact. In the long negotiations which eventually moved all teacher education out of the Normal Schools into the University, John was not obstructive but was if anything lukewarm.⁴⁶

In 1942 he was appointed to the Senate of the University of Alberta even though he did not have a university degree.

On Libraries and Research

Having taught in a rural school himself, Barnett was in a position to know that what many rural teachers needed was better libraries. He therefore persuaded the Alliance to set up a mailing library

⁴⁵A.T.A. Magazine, Vol. XXV (October - November, 1944), p. 5.

⁴⁶Powell, op. cit., p. 3.

from which teachers could be sent books for a few weeks at a time. Barnett referred to this as the A. T. A. Book Service.⁴⁷ It was also possible for teachers to borrow maps, charts, pamphlets and other teacher aids. Much of this material was, no doubt, a carryover from the Bureau of Education and Barnett felt constrained to make some use of it.

However, it was not until 1938 that a regular, professional library was begun as the result of a motion by the general secretary at the April Executive Council meeting in that year. The motion stated that the sum of \$1000 be placed in each of four trust accounts for scholarships, libraries, research and a reserve fund.⁴⁸ Thus, "the establishment of research and circulating libraries for the use, assistance and advancement of members of the Association"⁴⁹ took place.

The \$1000 earmarked for research was used to finance a monograph on Alberta vocations entitled Choosing Your Life Work, by F. T. Tyler and a study of the early history of Alberta education by Isidore Goresky.⁵⁰ Referring to the Tyler monograph, Lazerte

⁴⁷A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. XI (February, 1931), p. 23.

⁴⁸ Alberta Teachers' Association, Unpublished minutes of the Executive Council, April 3, 1938.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

states that "Mr. Barnett convinced the Executive of the desirability of giving this grant."⁵¹

Summary

Barnett's wholehearted dedication and sincere commitment to education engulfed his entire outlook. Thus, he was mainly interested in those things which would further the advancement of the Alliance, promote the welfare of teachers and improve the education of children. He believed that the progress of any country was dependent upon the well-being of its future citizens, the children. When he returned to England for a visit in 1936, he was greatly pleased to see the improvement in the health of the young people and commented on their rosy cheeks which he attributed to the milk and medicine being supplied by the Labor government.⁵²

John Barnett believed that Federal aid for public education was inevitable and that it would be accomplished during his lifetime. While general Federal aid to elementary and secondary education is not yet a reality, the substantial Federal involvement in vocational and post-secondary education vindicates his views to a large extent. His declaration that The British North America Act was not sacred and

⁵¹M. E. Lazerte, "Development of A. T. A." (Unpublished memoir, 1967), p. 5.

⁵²Mrs. Barnett, loc. cit.

could be changed was a concept which indicated that his thinking was ahead of his times. This view is now commonly accepted even though it has not been implemented.

Convinced that higher standards of teacher qualifications would contribute to the shaping of a sense of professional responsibility, Barnett strove constantly to improve teacher training facilities in Alberta. At the same time, he admonished teachers to be conscious of dignity and power in their positions and to act accordingly.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Any assessment of the contributions of John Walker Barnett to education in Alberta can not be divorced from his work as general secretary of The Alberta Teachers' Association. When Barnett immigrated to Canada in 1911, he brought with him a working knowledge of the National Union of Teachers of England and Wales, the professional organization which he had belonged to while teaching at Surbiton in England. This organization was an important influence in the establishment and development of the teachers' association in Alberta. Barnett was appalled at the lack of organization of the Alberta teachers and the deplorable conditions under which they were attempting to carry on. His efforts to attain compulsory membership, security of tenure, abolition of the individual form of contract, the right to bargain collectively and all other aims which he felt to be in keeping with the A. T. A.'s motto Magistri Neque Servi are necessarily the result of his desire to improve the working conditions for teachers and thus ultimately upgrade the quality of education in Alberta.

Just how instrumental was John Barnett in bringing about changes in the educational system of Alberta? What trend might the

development of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance have taken had some other man such as Misener or Newland been chosen to be the first general secretary of the Alliance? Major events which took place during Barnett's term of office and influenced the A. T. A. and education generally, might have had the same effect regardless of who was general secretary. The election of the Social Credit Government in 1935 is probably the most noteworthy of these events. However, improving conditions for rural teachers in Alberta, a province still in its pioneer stage of development, presented a personal challenge to Barnett and it is probably true to say that membership in the Alliance would not have increased under another secretary to the extent it did under Barnett. Few men would have been willing to make the personal sacrifices in time and energy and to campaign as strenuously for members as did John Barnett. In travelling more than a million miles throughout the length and breadth of rural Alberta, Barnett was motivated by his desire for progress, by his insistence that justice be done and by his consideration and sympathy for his fellow teachers. The success of Barnett's educational endeavors can thus be attributed to the fact that he built up a strong and viable organization with a loyal membership which served as a wedge to further his aims for education. He used the power of the Association to bring about changes in The School Act, to secure teacher representation on curriculum committees and to control unreasonable

school boards.

Barnett helped to build an organization which gained the respect and admiration of other teachers' associations across Canada and his work in the A. T. A. won national recognition when he was elected president of The Canadian Teachers' Federation in 1931. His foresight, ambition, courage and dedication to the cause of improving education were manifest in the part he played in the early development of the national organization. Barnett believed that the strength of any organization was based largely on the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of its officers and therefore he never spared himself in the prosecution of his official duties.

In spite of this, Barnett made mistakes. He had his faults and foibles — no human being is without them. His greatest failing was his uncanny knack of arousing opposition in people. His critics and opponents never failed to say that he antagonized people and thus made his work more difficult than it would otherwise have been. On the other hand, his admirers point out that Barnett had the ability to turn his erstwhile enemies into friends.

Although we are still not far enough removed from the achievements of the first general secretary of the A. T. A. to see them in their proper perspective, no doubt as time passes, they will be accorded the merit they deserve. Barnett's singleness of purpose, his clarity of vision, his tenacious courage, his sound judgment and

his great sense of humor were the qualities of character that enabled him to accomplish so much. He played a large part in the establishment of a teachers' organization which has been a major component in the Alberta educational system for the past 50 years and he will, no doubt, be remembered as long as the Association lasts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT DATES

IN THE LIFE OF J. W. BARNETT

1880 - August 28. J. W. Barnett was born at Grantham, Lincolnshire, England.

1886-1896 - Attended school - Grantham Wesleyan.

1896-1900 - Pupil teacher, Wesleyan School.

1900-1902 - Normal Training - Westminster Wesleyan Training College — two years.

1902 - Taught school at New Brompton — one year.

1903 - Taught at Queen's Road Council School, Wimbledon — one year.

1904 - Army Schoolmaster, Aldershot — one and a half years.

1905-1911 - Taught at Surbiton — six years.

1906 - Married Charlotte Neuss.

1908 - A son Bernard was born.

1910 - A daughter Ethel was born.

1911 - May. Immigrated to Canada.

- June to December. Taught at Park Hill rural school, Loughheed, Alberta.

1912 - January. Became Vice-Principal of Alberta College North.

1913 - Became Principal of Commercial Department of Strathcona High School.

- A daughter Evelyn was born.

1916 - A daughter Irene was born.

1917 - Alberta Teachers' Alliance was organized.

- Part time general secretary of A. T. A.

1918 - June 24. Official birthday of the A. T. A.

1919 - Appointed secretary of Western Canadian Teachers' Federation.

1920 - Became full time general secretary of A. T. A.

1921 - Edmonton High School Teachers' strike.

1924 - Became member of C. T. F. Constitution and Policy Committee.

1925 - June 1. Became Editor-in-Chief of A. T. A. Magazine.

1927 - Attended World Federation of Educational Associations in Toronto.

1930 - Became president of Canadian Teachers' Federation.

1934 - Appointed by C. T. F. to set up Bureau of Research.

1935 - Passing of The Teaching Profession Act.

1936 - Election of Social Credit government.

- Amendments to T. P. A.

- Returned to England as delegate to World Federation of Teachers' Convention at Cheltenham.

1942 - Vegreville teachers' strike November 10 to January 4
— 33 days.

1946 - Retired as general secretary of A. T. A.

1947 - June 29. Barnett died.

APPENDIX B

Wesleyan Day School
Grantham
Jan. 1st, 1900

John W. Barnett has served his apprenticeship under me in the above school and I have pleasure in bearing testimony to his good character both as a man and a teacher.

He is very intelligent, well read and employs good methods in his work and shows considerable anxiety for the progress of his scholars especially the backward ones.

He has taught successfully Tonic Sol-fa, Shorthand and Drawing up to the Sixth Standard.

I have entire confidence in recommending him as an assistant under Article 50 as I feel sure he will discharge his duties zealously and faithfully and I have good reason to believe that he will be found to have passed with credit the recent Queen's Scholarship Examination.

Geo. Pembleton,
Head Master

Lorne Villa,
58 Nelson Road,
New Brompton.
Jan. 14, 04.

Mr. J. W. Barnett has been an Assistant Master in the Higher Grade Wesleyan Schools here since July 02, and during the whole of this period he has given entire satisfaction both to the Managers and the Head Master. He is a bright and energetic teacher and good disciplinarian, obtaining good results with his classes.

T. R. Richards
Correspondent

Wesleyan School
Horncastle
Feb. 14, 1902

I am pleased to testify to the ability and character of Mr. John W. Barnett who was assistant in this school before his entrance to Westminster Training College.

Mr. Barnett worked hard and successfully, his class (Standard III) obtaining very good results at each periodical examination, and the order and discipline of the class were satisfactory. During the time Mr. Barnett was in this school, he made very considerable advance as a disciplinarian and before leaving was able to instruct and manage his class entirely without aid.

He was very helpful in the teaching of swimming and took a fair interest in the Boys' Cricket Club. He taught music very satisfactorily.

I am
Yours faithfully
Robert I. Ogden
Principal Teacher

Wesleyan Higher Grade
School
New Brompton/15/12/03

Mr. J. W. Barnett has been an Assistant in this Boys School (750 boys) since July 14/02. I can speak in the highest terms of his ability as a teacher and disciplinarian, and of the earnestness and loyalty with which he has discharged all of his duties. He has rendered noblest service also in the Night School and made himself very popular with the boys by the great interest he has taken in their sports.

I recommend him with every confidence as a valuable addition to the school staff.

Education Authority.

H. R. Redman
Headmaster

Dec. 15/03

APPENDIX C *

Edmonton, January 15th, 1921.

Dear Sir:-

Many inquiries are being made as to whether or not school boards have the right to pay, out of funds of the district, the expenses of delegates to the Trustees' Convention. I may say that this procedure has never been questioned and that school boards have the right to use district funds for that purpose as being in the interests of the ratepayers.

I beg to remain,
Your obedient servant,
J. T. Ross,
Deputy Minister.

Edmonton, January 15th, 1921.

Dear Sir:-

I wish to draw your attention to the Convention of School Trustees from all over the province, which is being held in the city of Calgary on the 2nd and 3rd days of February.

These are very difficult times for the carrying on of educational work and I want to impress on your board the fact that the Department of Education at the present time needs the advice and co-operation of the school boards of the province, in order that we may arrive at the best policies in connection with our schools. There are matters with regard to which I think school boards should be specially consulted at the present time. One of these is in connection with the teacher's contract form. As the school boards are one party to the contract, their views and wishes should be made known. Another matter I wish to discuss is the question of Government grants to school districts and there might also be much benefit from a change of ideas on questions such as consolidation, two-room schools, teachers' residences, and general matters of taxation for school purposes and forms of school government,

I do not believe that any school board can afford to be without representation at this convention and I urge upon you, as strongly as I am able, the desirability of your board sending at least one delegate to it.

I remain, Faithfully yours,
Geo. P. Smith,
Minister of Education.

* These letters are from the A. T. A. Magazine, Vol. I (February, 1921), p. 7.

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